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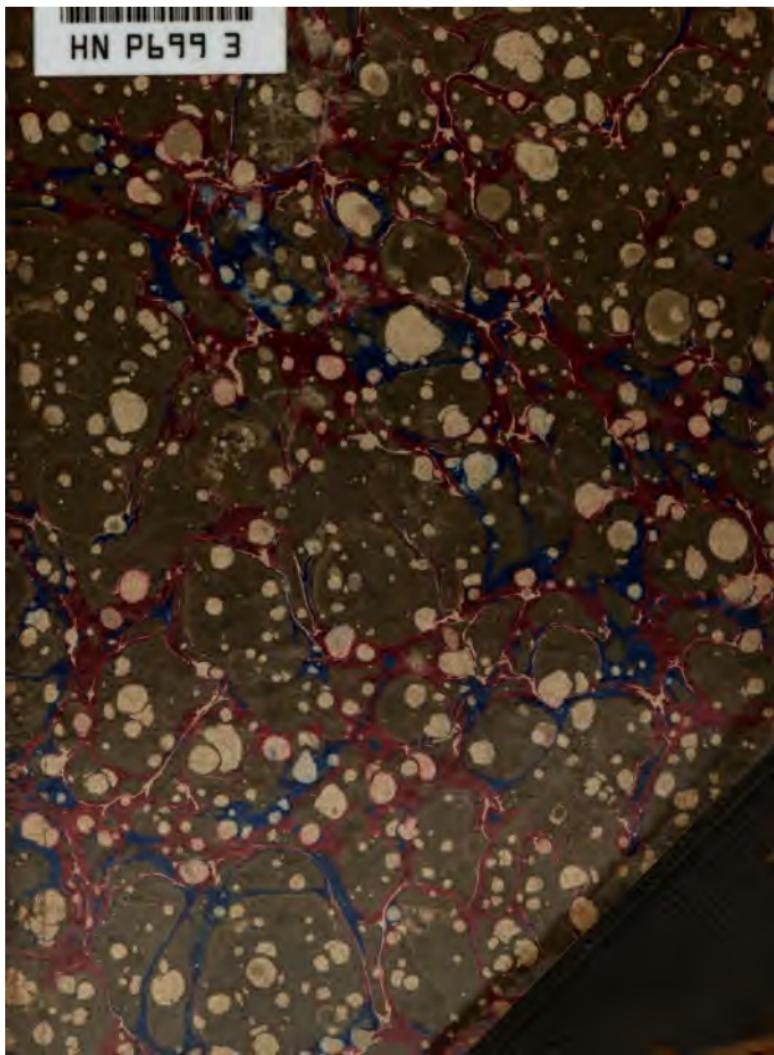
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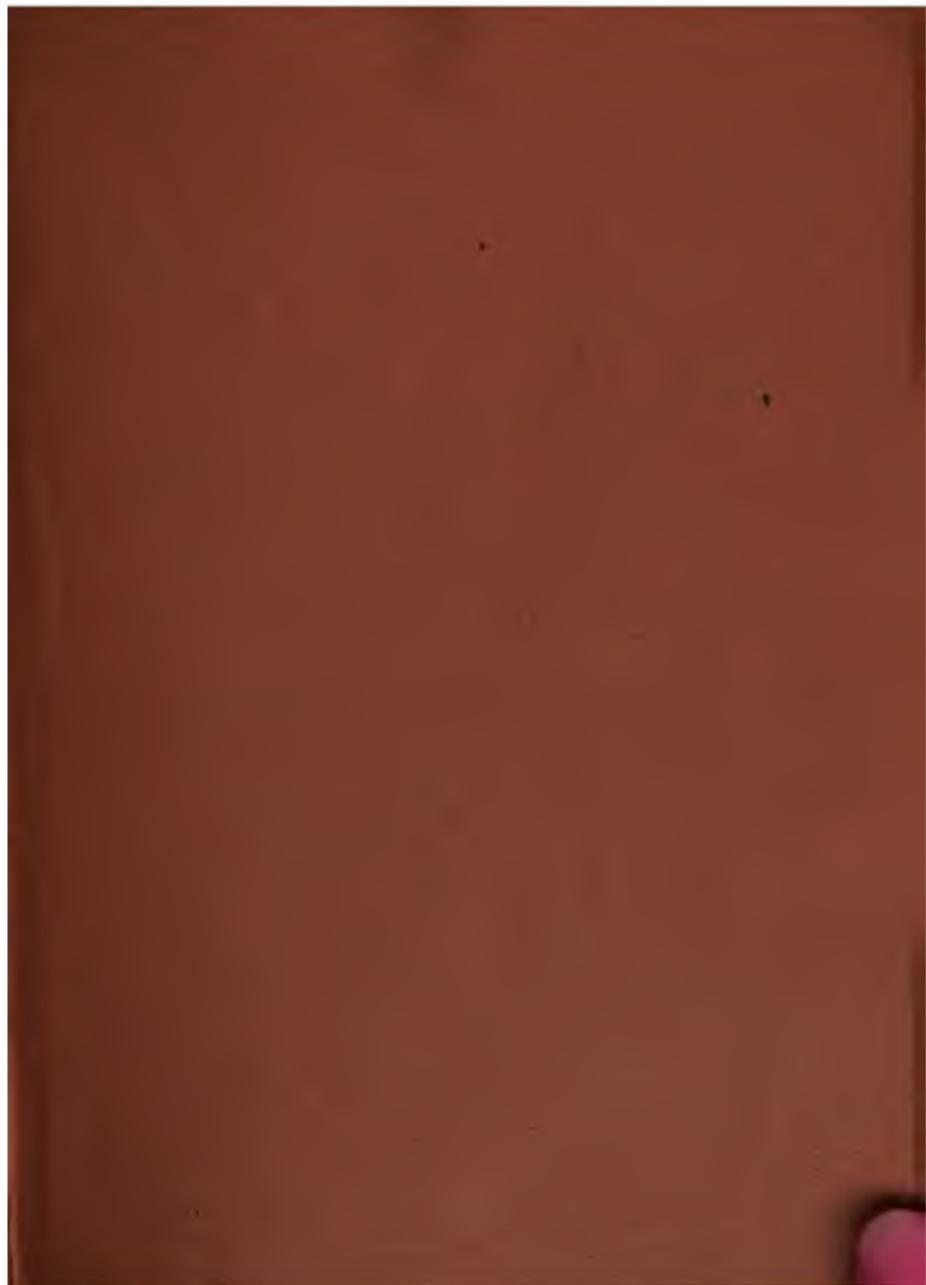
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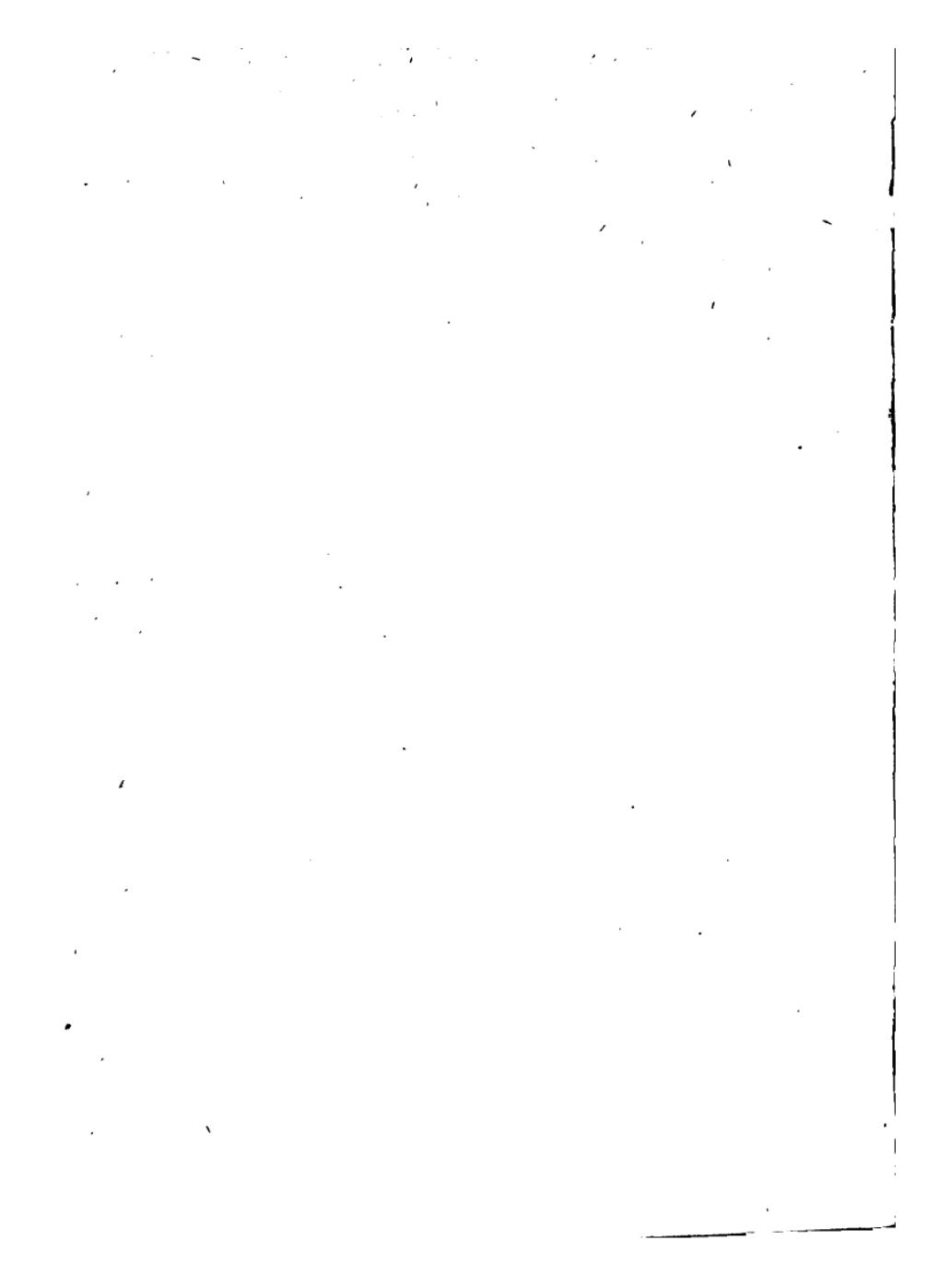
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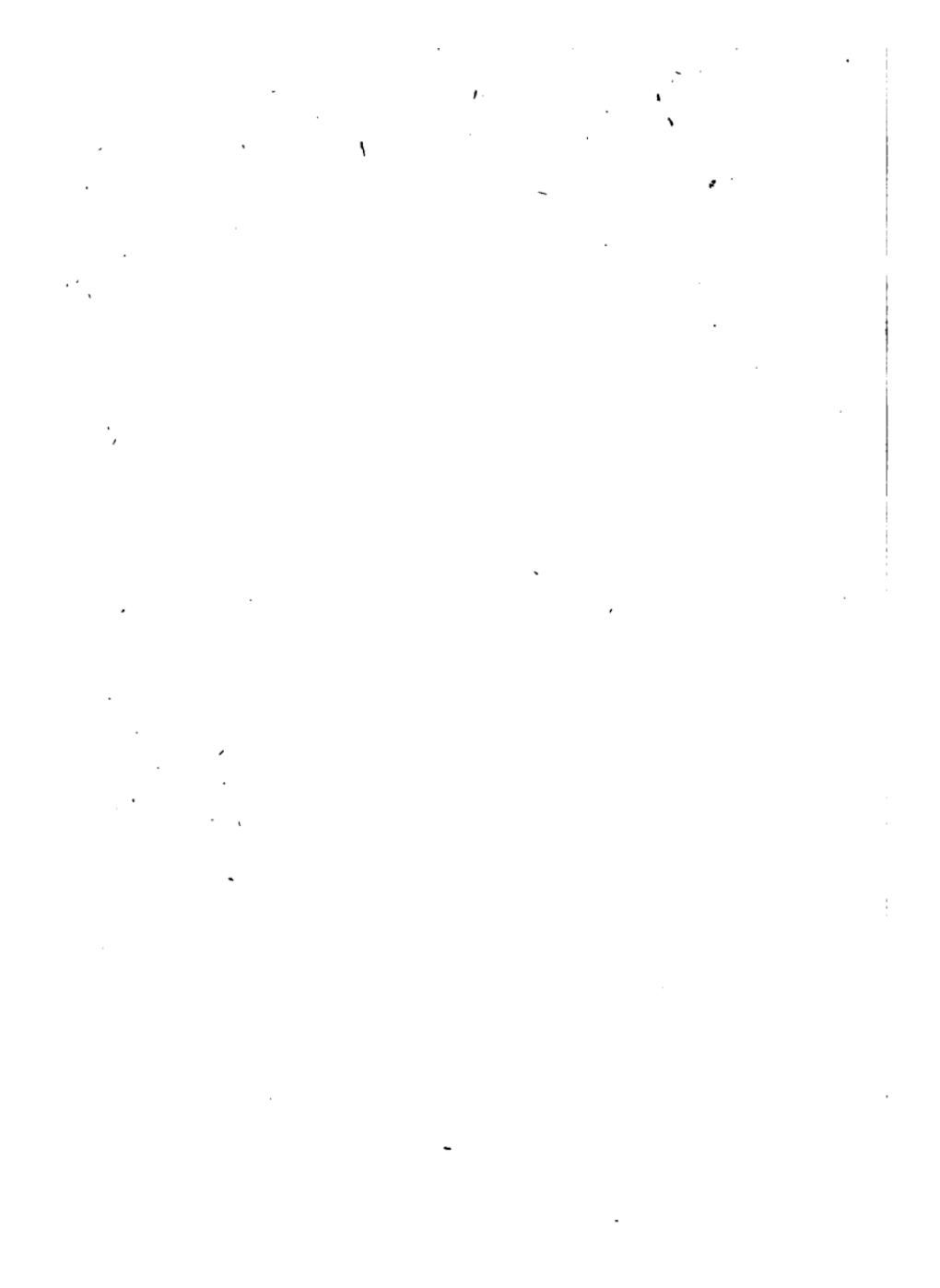
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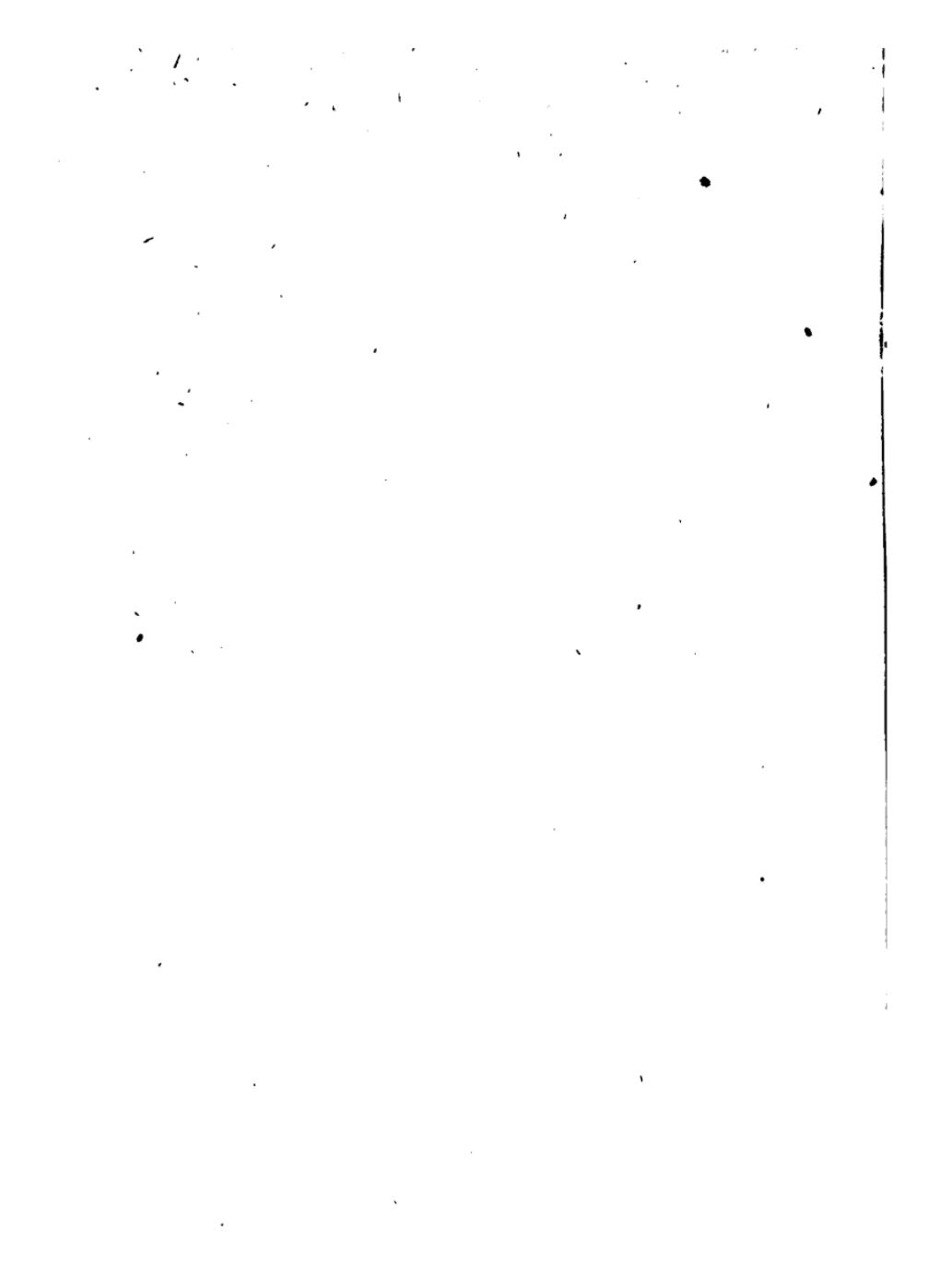












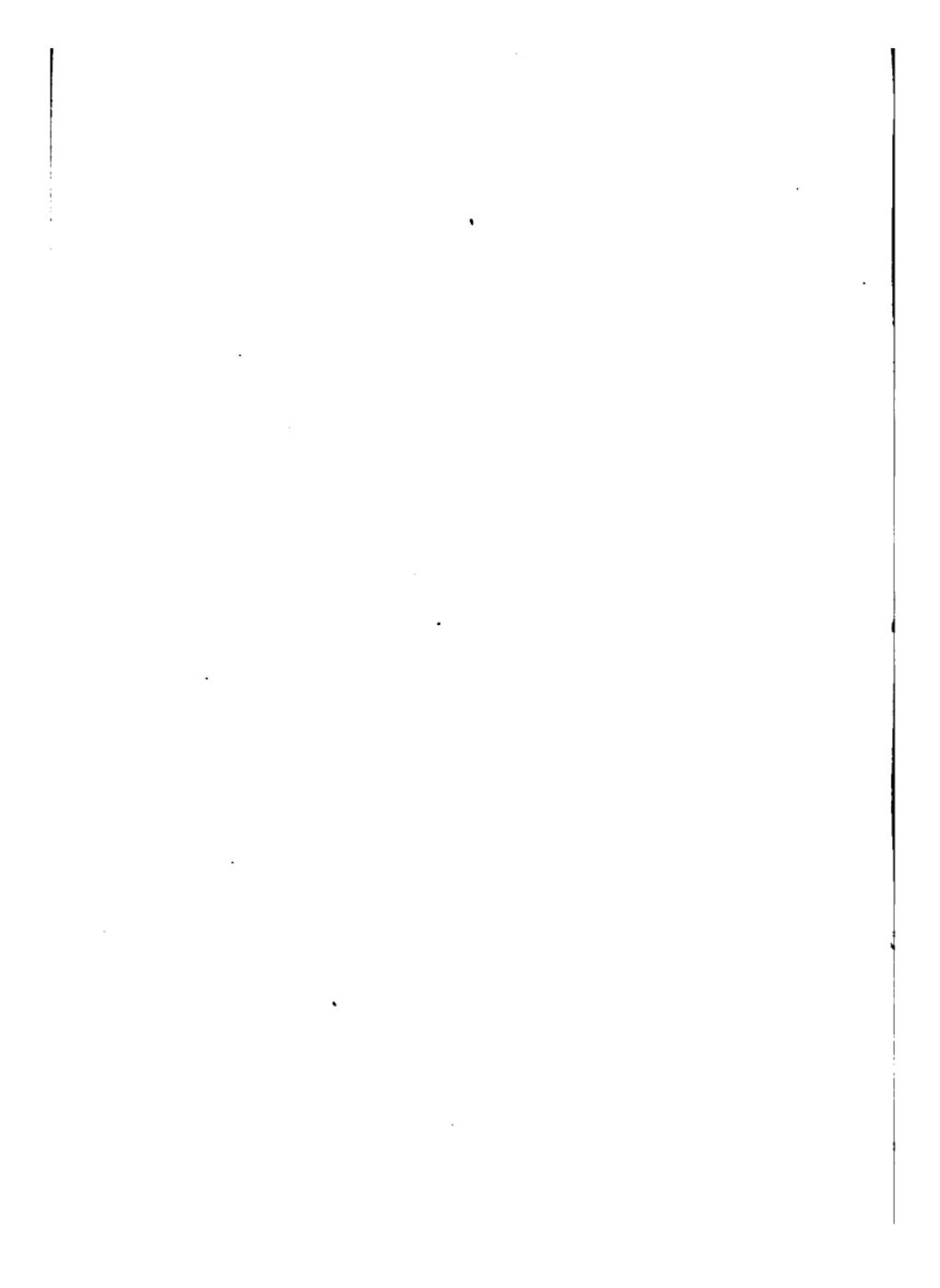
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IN THE OLDEN TIME
BY THE AUTHOR OF "MADEMOISELLE MORI."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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IN THE OLDEN TIME.

CHAPTER I.

A FEW serfs ordered to collect snails upon a day which they had counted as their own—an incident ludicrously trivial; the capture of a child whose very name was unknown beyond her father's land—an event hardly more important—and yet the one had set all Swabia in a blaze, and the other was about to rouse all Thuringia. A war had already begun, which in a few weeks spread from the frontiers of France to the Carpathian mountains.

Under the cover of night, Kaspar led a picked band of confederates out of the forest, armed with such rude weapons as they could muster: boar spears and spiked staves, axes, and the coulters from their ploughs; not one had a gun or sword. What they had might serve for the moment, but the want of better arms was strongly felt, and they had hailed such an opportunity of procuring them as this attack on Burgstein offered.

Kaspar went first, bearing the yet furled banner of the Bundschnuh. There was something weird and ghostly in this silent, soundless march, not a word exchanged nor a footfall audible. Silence had been strictly commanded, and everyone had wrapped his feet in rags or moss lest any noise should reach the watchman overhead on the castle.

They found Hildemund awaiting them among the rocks close to the cavern whence the Pöllat-wasser rushed out, and then a few words were said in hushed tones before, man by man, they disappeared into the cavern, except the two who were to accompany Hildemund. The main danger of the enterprise was his. He had said to Kaspar at the cave's mouth: "If I come not to open to you within the hour, deem I have fallen from the cliff or been taken within the castle, and get you swiftly hence, and think no more of me. But I shall not fail."

"So deem I, lad," said Kaspar, with exultation, as he followed his comrades into the cavern.

"If only the watchman mark nought!" said Wendel, who accompanied Hildemund. "Since this Graf has held the castle he has perched one on the keep."

"They keep not much look out in time of peace," said the other.

"Aye, time of peace!" said Wendel, with a low laugh of triumph.

Then no more was said, and their noiseless ascent continued until they were close under the walls.

As it happened, the sentinel looking abroad from his lofty perch had seen enough to rouse his attention. Although the night was not a clear one he could distinguish something moving on the way up to the castle, and becoming more and more perplexed, he summoned Kunz, now seneschal, and responsible for the safety of the castle. Kunz was ill-pleased at being thus aroused; he could see nothing.

"Nay, but I saw somewhat long and dark like a band of men but now. Where be they? St. Sebald! they have vanished! They came without sound, like ghosts—as perchance they were," added the watchman, with an uneasy recollection of a tale he had heard of a phantom host beleaguering the walls of a city all night, and disappearing only with cock-crow. Kunz swore at him for a sleepy fool.

"Nay, have it as you will, but there again—unless my eyes play me false as they never did yet—I see something small and dark yet coming up to the castle."

"There is nought, you dolt; you have been asleep," said Kunz, peering into the night. "Who should come hither at such an hour?"

"Nay, how should I know?"

"You have dreamed, I tell you," repeated Kunz; "my eyes are no dimmer than yours, and I see nothing."

The watchman looked again, and was constrained to admit that he too now saw nothing. It was just then that the three had come immediately under the castle, and were clambering as high as they could towards the stunted oak into which Hildemund must mount before he could reach the narrow mouldering way which had once led all round the base of the walls.

"A watchman should know when he is awake or asleep," said Kunz angrily. "Think you that you are posted here to fright folks for nought out of their beds at midnight?"

"You yourself bade me be ever wary, master seneschal, since none know how he who filled your office got hence with the little Fräulein. What if he be coming back?" said the sentinel.

Kunz looked long and more narrowly over the quiet landscape, and made a careful inspection of the court and keep before he went back to his bed, but he felt tolerably secure that Walther could not

know of the child's recapture, nor, if he had, could he have gathered a band such as the watchman fancied he had seen, to rescue her in so short a time. Still he remained on the alert for the best part of an hour, and then, as no further alarm came from any quarter, he fell asleep the more soundly for having been roused, while the watchman, half persuaded his eyes had deceived him, stood looking out over the road up to the castle. The sky was covered with clouds, which now and then withdrew their veil, and allowed a few stars to shine out in dark tracts of sky. From the watch-tower to the castle court seemed a dizzy depth, and the valley was so far below that the houses on the banks of the stream looked like a handful of toys that a child might have picked up and carried away, and yet the flow of the stream and the rush of the Pöllatwasser could be distinctly heard, and the barking of a dog in the village. Usually there were two or three great boar-hounds loose at night in the court, but now that the men introduced by the Graf were strangers to them, this was no longer the practice. Hildemund had thought of the dogs, but he did not fear them; he and they were old friends. His only anxiety was lest they should bark a welcome.

While the sentinel overhead was looking too far

afiel to perceive anything close at hand, Hilmund's companions had reached the last ledge of rock where they could stand, and paused. Hilmund was barefoot, the better to climb, and armed with his father's hunting-knife; he had Kilian's shield too, but he did not mean to encumber himself with that. He looked up at the tree, still far out of reach, and gave the shield to Wendel. "Now!" he said, stepping on it as the two men held it firmly, and raised him as high as they could upon it. He could just reach a projecting bough. With a swift clutch he grasped it, swung for an instant by his hands, and the next was in a fork of the branches. They saw him climb upwards, and emerge from the bough upon the face of the cliff, crawling along, higher and higher, amid the treacherous shadows and even more treacherous shifting lights, with the sheer cliff below him and the blank wall above. They looked at each other, only now realising what a service of danger the boy had undertaken, and then turned their eyes again to him, expecting each moment that he would slide or slip, and go down several hundred feet in a moment, and their hearts sank within them. They forgot the risk of being seen from the castle if they moved out of the shelter of the oak tree, and pressed forward to watch him. That the sus-

pitions of the sentinel had been earlier aroused was their safety, and that of Hildemund, whom he might have easily seen coming upward, but his attention was concentrated on the road winding to the castle; he never once looked down upon the walls.

Hildemund had descended this way once before, for the sport of the adventure, but it was in daylight, when he could see each projecting stone, and set his foot wherever there was a hole, or a path worn by rain; now he had almost to guess where he stepped, but he had a strong purpose filling his heart, and though he was forced to go far more slowly than he wished, he made steady progress. On the whole, it was less difficult than he expected. The rock, which at a little distance looked so smooth and perpendicular, was worn by weather and the storms of winter into countless juts and angles, and if there were no foothold he crept along below a slab of stone, and then turned upward again. After all it was less formidable by far, he thought, than the solitary journey which he had made along the underground way, amid a horror of great darkness. He was in the open air, with friends watching him below, though he dared not look down to see them. Hitherto he had crawled often on hands and knees upon the rocks,

but suddenly the two below saw him stand upright on the narrow way at the foot of the wall, so unexpectedly to them that they barely suppressed a cry of triumph. Even now he did not venture to glance down into the shadowy depth below, but went on towards the old postern, with a sudden fear lest it might have been repaired. But he need not have feared. Kunz, to whom his duties were new, had been content with the castle as he found it, and though he knew there was a disused way, yet as it was certain that Walther had neither come nor gone by it, he did not trouble himself about it. No one supposed that even a wild goat could scale the Burgstein, so inaccessible did it look from the valley below, so perpendicular from the castle overhead.

The path had been once some three feet wide, and though always requiring a steady head, since there was a sheer fall below it, was perfectly practicable until time and tempest wore it more or less away. Hildemund had, in fact, come to the most dangerous part of his adventure, all the more that he thought peril over for the moment. He was made aware of his mistake by all but stepping into empty space, where the path was altogether gone. He discovered it in time to bound over the gap, and alight where something of a way began again.

After that he stepped warily until he came to an angle of the building, which projected so as to cut off all further progress. There was not a fragment left of the road round it, nor could he in the least tell whether there were any path on the other side. Even could he pass round, it might be to find no foothold.

"I had not reckoned on this," he thought, standing still, and now looking steadily downward.

The rock fell sheer for many feet. The high blank wall faced him. He must pass round or give up the attempt.

"My little Dornröschen!" he said to himself, and drawing his broad hunting-knife from its sheath he drove it with all his force into a crack of the rock so as to form a slender support, on which to set his foot beyond the wall. He stepped out on it, and rounded the corner to find himself again on the pathway. Kneeling down, he wrenched out his knife with great difficulty, and went on again, wondering how much more of the ledge had been crumbled away by the stormy winter since his previous visit only a few months ago. The postern was, however, but a few yards further on, and he easily removed the mouldering plank and passed through. A steep flight of stone steps led upward to a platform, but he knew there was another obstacle in

the way, the heavy trap-door level with it, which shut in the staircase. He came under it and tried to heave it up, but it resisted. His heart gave such a throb of alarm as he had not felt even when he rounded the angle; he thought it was locked. He bent down his head and heaved with all the strength he had in his shoulders. It moved; only its own weight kept it down, and the hinges were still the less rusty that he had thoroughly oiled and cleaned them at the time of his mad prank in the preceding summer. They turned with less noise than he had dared to hope, though even then it seemed to him fearfully loud. It passed, however, unnoticed among the sounds usual in the castle by night—horses stamping, dogs uneasy in their kennels, some of the household astir—they drank and dined early and late in Burgstein now.

Hildemund emerged on the platform and lowered the trap-door again cautiously. He could either enter the castle by a little door communicating with the second floor, or keep in the shadow of the wall, breast high above the platform, and reach the court by a narrow stone staircase, built within walls. He chose the latter alternative. The hound which had betrayed Rosilde was chained in the court, and barked at him, but his low call of "Astolf! quiet, sirrah!" changed its note into a whimper of friendly

recognition. Hildemund crossed the court boldly, though at the gate-house he could hear voices and see the gleam of a lantern. Two or three men-at-arms were playing at cards there, but he feared nothing now; a moment later he was within the keep, and the way was open to Kaspar and his band.

"At last! We had well-nigh given it up," said Kaspar, as he stepped forth.

"At last!" repeated Hildemund. "Have you waited long?"

One after another were noiselessly emerging as he spoke.

"It seemed long enough in that grave!"

"Aye, I know that," said Hildemund, with full acquiescence. "Now the first thing is to seize the men at the gate."

"Are Wendel and Nicklas outside?"

"I take it so."

Kaspar turned to his band, now all assembled in the keep.

"Wilhelm, take the banner, since I cannot both hold it and strike for it. Ten to the hall, and gather all the weapons you can find. The rest to the gate, lower the drawbridge, and keep the way open. Seize every man who shows himself in the court."

"No harm to those who will join us," put in one of the peasants.

"If they truly will; and no mercy for such as refuse."

They were in the court by now, and Hildemund, hurrying into the chapel, heard the air fill with shouts and cries, and curses, and the clash of weapons, and baying of dogs. The whole castle was alarmed, and its inhabitants were hurrying out to the courtyard, but his one thought was to reach the Freifrau's chamber, through the way that he had gone with Walther, for there surely Dornröschen must be. He flung the door open and looked eagerly round, and his heart sank like lead. Silence and emptiness prevailed; no one had entered here since the Freifrau was borne forth to her burial. "Rosilde!—Dornröschen!" he cried as he stood in the midst of the dim room.

But no answer came.

"Where can they have put the child?" he asked himself, in mortal fear. "Have they—nay; who could have the heart to harm her?"

Yet it was with exceeding anxiety that, disregarding the increasing tumult in the castle court, and the risk that he might meet some one who would stop his progress with scant ceremony, Hildemund went from room to room. More than once

he encountered some member of the household rushing out, but passed unheeded in the general confusion and alarm. In an upper gallery an old woman was hurrying along, seemingly just wakened out of her sleep. "What is it—what is it?" she cried, stopping at the sight of him. "What has befallen?"

"Vengeance?" he answered. "Where is the Lady Rosilde?"

"Yonder," she stammered, bewildered with alarm. "Good youth, let me pass; harm not a poor old woman."

He loosed his grasp, and sprang into the room she had pointed out, one of those used by the servants in the castle, a very den of rags and disorder. "Dornröschen! sweetheart! are you here?" he cried.

A pitiful sob answered him, and by the light of a small lamp, newly kindled, he saw a little figure crouching on the floor.

"My little queen, is it you?" he said, snatching her up and gathering her into his arms. "My rose! dost thou not know me?"

"Hildemund! O Hildemund! have you come?" she whispered, and clung round his neck, shivering with fear. "Oh take me, take me away before

old Julchen comes back. Take me quickly, Hildemund."

"None shall harm thee, sweetheart. I am come to take thee home."

"Yes, yes, to Frau Magdalene," she answered, in sobbing accents. "But—Wolfgang?"

"He shall never see thee again, nor lay finger on my flower," said Hildemund, tenderly, and carrying her down to the court as he spoke, with her face hidden on his breast. "Be not affrighted; look not, nor heed for the noise. These be good friends who came hither with me."

He stood still in the doorway, awaiting the moment when he could safely carry her across the court to the drawbridge. The combat had been a fierce one. Taken at a disadvantage though the household were they had resisted bravely, and several peasants, as well as more than one man-at-arms, lay wounded or dead on the ground. Maddened by this stubborn resistance and by the sight of blood, the peasants were bearing furiously upon the little group of combatants, who, gathered round Wolfgang and Kunz, were defending themselves desperately, protected by such armour as they had hastily assumed, and using all their practised skill against the savage onslaught of their enemies. Hildemund could not but feel a sympathy for the

gallant front they showed to overpowering numbers, and be glad his work was not to add another to the odds against them. Borne back, they turned again and again to bay, each time repelling their foe with blows which stretched one after another on the ground, as they drew in a compact group toward the keep, answering the cries of "Live the Bundschuh!" with "A Lichtenberg! A Lichtenberg! St. Michael for Lichtenberg!" As they reached the open door they made a sudden charge upon their adversaries so fierce and unexpected, that the peasants gave back for a moment, and before they rallied, the Lichtenbergers were within the keep, flinging the heavy door by main force in the faces of their enemies, and had closed and barred it with a shout of defiance and triumph. A yell of disappointed rage burst from the peasants, as they battered vainly at the massive iron-studded planks with their axes and the sledge-hammers brought in haste from the forge, and poured out threat upon threat. A scornful shout, strangely distant, replied; then all was silent within the keep. "Curses on it! burn it down!" called a voice, and in an instant half the band had scattered to seek wood, hay, straw—anything and everything which could serve as fuel.

A mighty heap was rapidly built up, a torch

flung into it, and smoke began to curl upward, followed by showers of sparks, and red, leaping, flickering flames, whose glare lighted up the blank, eyeless wall of the keep and the courtyard, and the bodies lying there; and through the crackling and roar of the fire came the cries and shouts of the peasants as they watched it rise, and piled up planks and faggots and all the furniture they could find to feed it. The seasoned oak door resisted, even when the flames grew so scorching that those who were feeding them could not come within yards of the pile. But at length the blackened wood, heated through, broke into flame, amid a wild and general shout from the peasants, who could hardly restrain themselves from plunging into the fire to shower new blows upon it, but it was yet long before a way was opened into the keep. The moment that passage was possible they rushed in, with cries of triumph and menace—only to find they were threatening deaf walls. Not a soul remained in the keep.

“By the fiend, they have escaped!” shouted Kaspar, with a gesture of disappointed rage. “The way by the Pöllatwasser!”

None had recollected that the secret passage had been left open. Wolfgang and his men had profited by it.

“Follow! follow! we may overtake them yet!” Kaspar cried, and with many of his comrades he dashed over the drawbridge and down the winding way. Hildemund saw the court almost clear, and snatched up a cloak lying on the ground, wrapped it round Rosilde, and hastened after them. He felt sure that Wolfgang’s band had had ample time to escape, and on the whole he was glad of it. There would have been butchery had the peasants found them in the keep. He could think of little but his rescued charge, as he carried or led her through the woods, encouraging and assuring her that none should hurt her. In the exultation of having recovered her he felt strong to defy all danger. Frau Magdalene almost forgot all fears and heartache when she saw them both safe, and held the child in her arms. “My little sweeting, have I got thee back?” she exclaimed, with warm, motherly caresses. “My little one, what have they done to thee?”

Her voice was full of dismay. She could hardly believe that this wan creature who clung so trembly to her was the high-spirited child whom she had parted from but two days before.

“Aye, what have they done?” repeated Hildemund, in deep indignation. “How have they used her?”

“They—they threatened me sore,” whispered Rosilde, “because I would not tell who had hidden me, nor where I had been, and Wolfgang told old Julchen to beat me, and she did—look! and shut me up alone, and gave me nought to eat, and—and—oh, I am so tired and hungry!”

She broke into a sobbing wail.

“My child! My little Dornröschen! Fetch food, Hildemund. Eat, little one; you are safe again with those who love you well. My poor little maid!” said Magdalene, her heart swelling as she saw the marks of stripes on the little fair arms and shoulders. Hildemund said nothing as he looked at them, but had he seen them a little sooner Wolfgang would have had to give account for each one of them. He knelt and kissed them, his heart too full for words.

“But I told nought!” said Rosilde, recovering something of her old self under the cherishing which was rapidly restoring her. “I said they should kill me before I told. They would have punished you and Hildemund. And, indeed, I could not help Wolfgang’s finding me. I kept my word and stayed in the coppice, but Astolf found me.”

“They know not where you had found hiding?”

said Magdalene, with a breath of deep relief. "It is well for us all that you were thus steadfast."

Meanwhile Wolfgang and his followers had seized the unexpected chance which offered itself to them, though Kunz had had hard work to force him to retreat before serfs and churls. "If I flee, it is but to take such vengeance, sooner or later, on every dog among them as shall be talked of fifty years hence," he said at length, and with that hope suffered himself to be led away. They made the best of their way along the passage, more than one slipping into the stream and narrowly escaping being carried away by it, and threw themselves into the forest, making in all haste for Schloss Geyer, lighted by the flames which rose up, a fearful beacon seen far and wide, from the Burgstein.

The fire could burn the great door of the keep and the floors within, but could only scorch its massive walls, and would have died out for want of fuel, had not those peasants who had lingered to pillage thrown brands into the other parts of the castle, before they retired, carrying their wounded away with them. A red and awful glare spread over the sky, and columns of smoke arose and shook out their dark and wavering banners above the flames, whose roar made all other sounds inaudible. In the valley below every dweller of the

Ilzthal was astir, gazing up fearfully to the castle or hurrying to the scene. The stream ran blood-red under the ruddy glare—an ominous sight, noted by many. The sun had long risen before the fire died down, and the pure, clear daylight contrasted with the strange and threatening light of the flames, but by the next evening only charred walls, and an open gateway, and black thin ashes fluttering far and near over the valley, remained of what had the evening before been Schloss Burgstein.

CHAPTER II.

By the next day only the old and sick, the children and women were left in the Ilzthal and the neighbouring valleys; and not all the women either; for not a few had accompanied the peasants in their march to join their brethren, who had already gathered into a formidable army. Hildemund was gone with them, full of eager hope and generous longing to throw in his lot with the oppressed, and a glad certainty that the peasants would show by their moderation and self-restraint how worthy they were to be heard and heeded.

Unutterable consternation filled the upper classes far and wide; this sudden rising on so vast a scale, this lack of hands to till the ground, this loss of tithes and dues, together with the uncertain danger, shadowy and undefined, yet none the less real, which all at once threatened them, roused a wild and savage terror. Every peasant who fell into their hands was slain or horribly mutilated, castles and convents armed and fortified themselves with all the speed they could. Young Philip of Hessen

was calling his men-at-arms together, and putting his borders into the best state of defence he could, before crossing into Thuringia to aid his kinsfolk there; three other princes were preparing to join him; Markgraf Kasimir, and the terrible George Truchsess, with the army of the Swabian League, were taking the field—six experienced leaders against a horde of undisciplined and half-armed peasants!

But for the moment that horde was irresistible. To the old and countless grudges against their lords the insurgents added the strongest of all motives, for they fought not only for personal rights and liberty, but for religious freedom.

Although Luther fiercely denounced them, seeing but too well what obstacles and stumbling-blocks this insurrection would put in the way of the Reformation, and by his stern and uncompromising attitude did more to restrain them than could any prince or general, they set in the forefront of their demands the right to have reformed teachers, and the cessation of the rising persecution against them. Filled with enthusiasm, strong in the justice of their cause, the untrained peasant army, though opposed to all the might and chivalry of Germany, held its own, and swept over the country, waxing daily more numerous, more powerful, and

more dangerous. Terms which would have amply satisfied the peasants at first were soon only thought of with derision, and ere long the avowed aim of the war was to divide all lands and goods among the peasantry, and to endure no superior except the Kaiser. The old hereditary reverence for the imperial dignity awed them even now, in the hour of unbridled triumph.

An unexpected strength was lent to their cause by the fear or sympathy of many towns, which opened their gates and entered into alliance with them, furnishing arms and provisions. Castles and convents were burned and pillaged; Würzburg was besieged, and the citizens made but a feint of defence, hoping to see the Bishop's fortress taken. All the great duchy of Franconia was overrun in a few weeks—Franconia, with its free towns, its two bishoprics, and the enormous estates of the Teutonic knights!

But, on the other hand, ill news began to come from the Danube; the Truchsess had won two great battles there, and another was lost by the Bodensee, and the lords began to triumph; but, undaunted by reverses, new swarms of insurgents rushed forward to avenge the thousands slain. In an evil hour the young Count of Helfenstein cut the throats of some stray peasants whom he encountered going peace-

ably on their way, and thereupon the army of insurgents fell upon his castle and town of Weinsberg, and every knight and noble whom they took there was passed between their pikes, and fell pierced with countless wounds. It was an ancient mode of capital punishment which the peasants remembered for the benefit of von Helfenstein and his friends. Portents were seen; a bloody cross appeared in the sky, and half-crazed preachers went about with the army, lashing the peasantry up to fury. Münzer issued a proclamation, bidding them give the fire no time to go out, the sword no time to cool. From a march to demand justice, the rising had become a war of extermination.

• Rumours of these things reached the Ilzthal, brought by beggars, or a wounded man creeping back, or by the very air, or a mocking fiend, so wild and uncertain and incredible did they seem. Magdalene's heart sickened and fainted in these days of suspense, and she could hardly find voice to reply to Rosilde's constant inquiries when Hildemund would come home, and why he was so long away. When and how, indeed, would her boy return, and in what wild and fearful scenes must he not be involved!

To his now scanty congregation Pfarrer Basil preached sermons full of indignation and sorrow,

listened to with sullen displeasure. There was not one who dwelt in the valley except the bailiff of Burgstein whose heart was not with the rebels, and he fled in terror, expecting that a stern reckoning would be exacted of him for blows given, and old and feeble labourers ill-treated, and dues harshly exacted, for though the Freiherr had not himself been a severe master, he let his underling deal much as he would with the serfs and tenants. Once Pfarrer Basil came to seek Magdalene, and learn if indeed Hildemund were gone with the Ilzthalers. She could only bend her head in mute assent, with a look of deep sadness.

“See, Frau, what has come of the lither life you have weakly let him choose!” exclaimed Pfarrer Basil; “knowing no rein, the boy has followed his own wild will, and been thus fearfully misled! I fear me that Ulfric the leper is not altogether innocent in the matter either. He spoke strangely of these blind and sinful rebels when last I saw him. But you—were you not warned? Think you not now that you are answerable for this outcome?”

“It may be I have done ill,” she replied, sadly and humbly; “yet I meant it rightly. I ever hoped that he would follow in the steps of his forefather, Berthold von Rohrbach, and be an evangeliser, and

that even now, learning the country and the people, he was being trained thereto."

"Was this, then, your thought?" said Pfarrer Basil, suddenly comprehending what had seemed so unaccountable in her conduct. "The plan of a foolish woman, methinks, and of a heretic," he added, severely. "Where were his commission from his spiritual superiors? where his discipline and teaching? A wild project, in truth, and wildly has it turned out. Do you know what deeds are done by those with whom he has cast in his lot? Have you heard of Weinsberg, and of the insults heaped on the noble Countess of Helfenstein, and how, foremost in all, is that Kaspar who went hence after leading the people of these valleys to the sack of Burgstein?"

"Yes, I have heard somewhat thereof, reverend sir."

"Tongue will not tell the foul deeds these madmen do," he continued, in rising excitement, "God-forgotten as they are—heretics and rebels against heavenly and earthly rule! But yet I will speak thereof, yes, at the altar itself. I will excommunicate everyone who does not at once return and make due submission!"

He had worked himself up into greater and greater anger as he spoke, and now, his hand out-

stretched, his eyes flashing, he seemed in act to hurl the threatened curse upon those of whom he spoke. Magdalene rose up and faced him.

“No!” she said with force, “that you of all men will not do. You, Herr Prediger, you who know so well what anguish the innocent feel to remember that their beloved died under the ban of the Church! You would do this!”

He turned on her as if she had struck him. “Frau!” he exclaimed, in deep anger. Then his face changed, and he grew very pale; all the anger died out of his eyes.

“Alas!” he said, “you are right. Who am I, a fellow-sinner, to close the doors of heaven upon them? How should I judge their hearts? Yet see what wrack comes of rebellion against lawful authority.”

“True, reverend sir, and I could weep myself well-nigh blind for the bloody deed of Weinsberg, and that my son is among these misguided men, yet is it not strange that all Germany makes such ado over that one foul deed, yet none has cried out all these years at what the common man has suffered?”

It was so true that Pfarrer Basil could only marvel he had never seen it so before. Rosilde had been standing near. She came close now, and

looked inquiringly in his face. "You are not angry with Hildemund? He will come back soon," she said.

"Heaven grant it, and spare you further sorrow, Frau," he said.

"They are base churls to rebel against their lords," said the child, hotly; "if my father were here he would not have let them."

Pfarrer Basil seemed glad to turn to a new subject. He asked Magdalene if she saw reason to fear molestation on Rosilde's account. Magdalene thought not. It had been reported that the little Fräulein had perished in the sack of Burgstein. Old Julchen's fears had magnified her encounter with Hildemund, whom she had not recognised in her alarm, to a history of a savage peasant, who had forced her to tell where the child was, and slain it with his knife. This rumour would probably prove her safety, especially as time was passing, and the universal confusion prevented any search being made as to the truth of the story. Junker Wolfgang had hurried to join George Truchsess, with all the men remaining to him; Burgstein was in ruins, and he could not return there, whatever the event of the war. A woman who had come to Magdalene for advice and medicine had indeed seen the child, but hearing her call Frau Dahn

"Muhme," observed, "You have a little cousin with you now, Frau," and took no further notice of her. It seemed safer to make no mystery of her presence, and neither hide nor show her. Rosilde listened attentively to all this, bending her little head now and then in sign of assent. She had received an ineffaceable impression from the time spent in Wolfgang's hands, and even now would wake sobbing from a dream that she had been recaptured. When Pfarrer Basil left the house she accompanied him for a few steps. He paused to look over the wide view, with much the same deep and silent pleasure that Petrarch felt when he gazed on the panorama which feasted his eyes as he stood on Mount Ventoux. Often and often he too reproached himself for his keen delight in the loveliness of nature, as if it were a snare to turn his soul from heavenly things, but the deep joy which it awoke in him could not be quenched. As he stood drinking it in, Rosilde uttered a little cry of pleasure. She had espied Ulfric coming towards them, and joyfully called his name. Herr Basil looked too, and a shudder of repulsion of which he was not master ran over him at the sight of the leper. He always reproached himself with even exaggerated bitterness for the feeling, and expiated it by hard and secret penance, but his first impulse would ever be to

shrink from whatever was diseased or loathsome. "As little children," he said to himself, as he saw the innocent, unalloyed pleasure with which Rosilde greeted him, and heard the soft and tender tones in which Ulfric replied. Well might he dread lest those frank eyes should learn to turn away from him, and that joyful welcome become mere compassion, if nothing colder. He might not touch the little hand, far less kiss the upraised face, but he might read its sweet welcome and know that here was one to whose eyes he was not an outcast; had no sign of divine displeasure upon him. Rosilde knew now that he was no angel, but a certain mysterious halo and fascination still surrounded him, and made a meeting with him a delightful event.

It was a new thing for Ulfric thus to leave his lonely retreat. Until now he had never willingly encountered any eyes but those of Magdalene and Hildemund, whose tender pity had stood between him and despair in the darkest period of his life. From all others he shrank, for no one could be so conscious of his condition as he; no one could loathe it so unutterably. But his link with the world was gone with Hildemund, and he must go forth if he would provide himself with food and fuel. He had come now to know whether Magdalene had heard any rumour of a great battle at

Frankenhausen, where Münzer was reported to have gathered his forces. Pfarrer Basil was sure she knew nothing of this. She came out while they were speaking together, and both men were struck with the impress which the deep anxiety of the last two months had left upon her. Until now, amid all sorrow and care, she had an undivided mind. Now she was racked by sympathy for the peasants and grief at their cruelties; ceaseless fears for Hildemund, and a deep sense that this seizing of the sword could bring nothing but evil to all concerned.

“Has there then been a great battle? Know you the upshot of it?” she asked, with trembling lips.

“I fear it has gone ill with the peasants,” answered Ulfric, who, himself outcast and despised, passionately sympathised with “the common man.” “Karl, the smith, who has fled back hither, says that Münzer was like a raging demon, and preached on the battle-field, promising his troops a miracle to aid them, and they awaited the onslaught of the enemy, singing a hymn and gazing on a many-coloured ring around the sun, a sign, as they deemed, of help from heaven, and raised no hand until they were mown down like grass before the scythe.”

"Was Hildemund there, think you?" Pfarrer Basil asked, looking at Magdalene. She shook her head, as Ulfric, too, looked at her, saying, "I know not."

"I know not neither," she answered, pressing her hands together.

"And that pestilent fellow, this Münzer?"

"He is taken," answered Ulfric, briefly; and Herr Basil understood that there was more behind which he would not speak before Magdalene and the child. The look on his face sufficiently told that the fate of Münzer was no tale for their ears.

"I must see this Karl," said Pfarrer Basil. "Brings he no news of any of the Ilzthalers?"

"Many are slain, but Kaspar and the miners are away to Würzburg; the bishop has fled, and the townsfolk are for the Bauer."

Magdalene could only pray that her boy might be among those who were not at the fatal day of Frankenhausen.

That dark day was followed by another defeat in Elsass, where the peasants capitulated on terms, but were fallen upon by the merciless Antoine of Lorraine, and butchered in heaps. Over sixteen thousand fell there alone, yet still the war went on, and the land lay untilled, the cattle untended;

all over the country castles and monasteries were still sacked and burned by infuriated serfs, whose villages were set on fire in return by their lords. The woods were full of robber bands, and of mutilated and wounded fugitives. The women and the old would have starved in the Ilzthal and many other places, had there been anyone to keep the streams and forests; but all rangers and bailiffs had fled, or were fighting under their lords, and with a certain sense of freedom and exultation everyone who could creep or crawl forth gathered fuel and laid snares for fish and game, and for the moment fared better than any among them had ever done before.

But the clouds gathered darker and more thickly each day. The early and amazing success of the peasants was followed by reverses as tremendous, but despair and fury sustained them for some months longer, though now the towns turned against them, fearful of pillage at their hands, or of sharing the punishment inflicted by Markgraf Kasimir on Rothenburg, which saw twenty of its principal citizens beheaded in the market-place, and lost all its rights as a free city. In Franconia alone the number of slain was computed at 10,000 peasants, yet others still crowded into the empty places, though they had struggled in vain, and knew it—

knew it with a frenzy of despair which made death welcome.

Among those who could take no active part in the rising, but whose fate none the less depended on it, a deep dread began to replace the strange and terrible joy which had at first possessed all hearts. One day—perhaps very soon—the abbots and nobles would return, and there would be a reckoning for these last months. There was almost as much weeping over the few peasants who came back as over the many who came home no more. Few priests had dared to remain at their posts in this time of mortal peril, but Pfarrer Basil had stayed among his people, and none had molested him. They looked to him now as the only one who could stand between them and the vengeance of their lord, and he felt with deep thankfulness that he was beginning to be looked on as a friend by the flock which had regarded him with such obstinate suspicion. Now that evil had come upon them he preached no more of wrath and judgment, but spoke again of mercy and love, as he had done when first he came; and hungry hearts thrilled at his touch and hung on his words, though others, wrapped in sullen despair, would have none of his teaching.

Neither those who heeded nor those who turned

a deaf ear guessed that in all the valley there was no soul more troubled than that of their priest. As far as he could see, his life had been a failure. His inclination had been to become a monk, but he had renounced it for the humbler vocation of a parish priest, partly because it *was* the humbler, partly to give a home to a mother whose despair at the thought of losing him had gone to his heart. He had early been appointed to an important parish, for Basil von Below was no poor mass priest, of lowly birth, dependent on the offerings of his flock, and glad to be bidden to the table of some rich man who hoped by hospitality to an ecclesiastic to benefit by his prayers and to have spiritual advantage from his good works—"guter Werke theilhaftig zu werden"—as the phrase went. His rare gift of preaching soon brought the eyes of his superiors upon him, but his fervent impulsiveness could not but bring him into trouble, and while believing himself an orthodox son of the Church, which he ardently longed to see purified, he found himself accused of Lutheran heresies. His bishop, like a great many other high ecclesiastics, preferred the Church as she was, and with a remark, that if his voice would persist in crying it should at least cry in a wilderness, he sent his troublesome subordinate to the Ilzthal. It was a crushing blow.

Pfarrer Basil had been listened to and loved as were few preachers or priests; his heart was full of his beloved flock, he rejoiced in knowing that their hearts were in his hand, and in his full and unceasing work he could keep the ever-gnawing grief of his life, the thought of his friend, that "other half of his soul," as he had said to Magdalene, at bay. His mother had died before this stroke, blessing her good son. At least she did not suffer from it. With that one consolation he came to the forest valley where his lot was henceforth cast, to face his life and work out his doubts as he could. If he hoped to find refuge from them in the books which Magdalene lent him he was greatly deceived. Again and again he locked them up, and for weeks never opened them, fasted and prayed, and did sharp penance; they drew him to them as with a magnet, and more and more their teaching crept into his mind and filled his thoughts. He looked like one driven by a spirit which racked and haunted him. Sometimes he could bear no human companionship; at others only that of Ulfric the leper. Though he shrank from the man as a leper, he found a comfort and support in his companionship such as no one else could give. Ulfric, though younger than he, had struggled in waters as deep and stormy, wherein he, too, had all but gone

down; nay, even now, often felt them closing above his head; like Pfarrer Basil he had a deep and fervent sympathy for the oppressed and the troubled in heart; like him he had a keen sense of spiritual things, but where the priest's mind was all storm and confusion of thoughts which he dared not work out, Ulfric received all the teaching of his Church with absolute, childlike, unquestioning faith, incomprehensible to one who had it not, but most resting and comforting to the tossed and troubled mind of Pfarrer Basil, who sometimes would pay constant visits to the Ilzthal, and then again would be weeks before he reappeared. Ulfric's feelings towards him were a mixture of wonder, pity, sympathy, and a certain perplexity, with a growing love and tenderness such as Pfarrer Basil never failed to inspire in those who did not feel in opposition to him. There were such, and not a few; he was not a man who knew how to conciliate an opponent, though he could win devoted friends, to some of whom he seemed a very apostle; while to others he was no less dear, though they saw in him less a guide and leader than a man impulsive, fallible, influenced more than he knew by mixed motives, most human yet most lovable; one to whom a home and family were essential, and who was not the stronger but the weaker that neither in earth nor heaven had

he any living or dead to call him husband or father. Scrupulously obedient to his spiritual superiors, he had accepted his sentence to its fullest extent, and kept up little or no communication with anyone beyond his parish. The life of a hermit could hardly have been more solitary.

The only member of his flock who could at all have entered into his feelings besides Ulfric was Magdalene Dahn, and with her he was always more or less in antagonism. She came to hear him preach, and drank in strength and help from his teaching, but with the man himself she was not thoroughly in sympathy. Her strong and upright nature could not comprehend the doubts and self-tortures of one much more vehement and complicated than her own; as a woman, she could not realise the appalling position of a priest who found himself questioning the dogmas of the great Roman Church, with her weight of authority and her centuries of existence; and as the descendant of Berthold von Rohrbach Magdalene had inherited an independence of thought which made passive obedience, such as Ulfric accepted implicitly, and Father Basil strove passionately to attain, neither desirable nor practicable. But in these heavy days, when every rumour seemed gloomier than the last, and she knew not whether her one child was alive

or dead, the ardent belief of Father Basil in prayer, and his intense personal love for his Lord, were inexpressibly precious to her, and she looked up to him with thankful gratitude, which yet did not prevent a certain instinct of combat and discussion when they met face to face in other circumstances.

She needed comfort sorely in the long absence of all news which followed the defeat at Frankenhäusen. No fugitive came back; no beggar appeared at the Bannwart's house, no armed band passed through this lonely district. For all which was known of the war it might have been ended.

In point of fact it was ended, for Würzburg, seized by the peasants, had been retaken by the Swabian League, and no stronghold now remained in the hands of the insurgents. Whole districts were a wilderness; countless castles and monasteries lay in ashes; not a few towns had suffered severely, but they had no place on which to fall back, no fortress within whose walls they could make a stand or check the steady, ruthless advance of the army which was driving them before it. When the first mighty force of enthusiasm had been spent, the superiority of discipline and arms on the side of the knights and nobles became hopelessly apparent.

CHAPTER III.

THE first news that all was lost was brought by Hildemund himself. Late one evening, unobserved by the mother whose thoughts were, nevertheless, dwelling on him, he stood in the doorway of his home, gazing silently at the peaceful scene within, so far removed from everything which he had beheld in the wild tumult of the last six months that it seemed to him almost as if he saw it in a dream. The fire burned low on the wide hearth, but an occasional flickering gleam leaped up, and shone on the pewter plates and dishes on the shelves opposite, and the massive andirons on the hearth. The great black cauldron was simmering on its hook; a spinning wheel stood in one corner. Daylight was fast fading, and Magdalene sat by the window, to catch the last rays, busily embroidering a maniculare, as the silver ribbon was called which a priest wrapped round his hand at the Mass, a gift, no doubt, for Father Basil. Rosilde sat on a stool at her feet, working too, and singing while she worked, a mediæval carol, quaint and sweet as

the childish voice trilled it forth. Hildemund knew it well; he had learned it himself as a child.

I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day in the morning.
And who was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day——

She broke off. "It is not as pretty as the last song Ulfric taught Hildemund," she said. "Will you sing me that, Muhme? 'Ach, wie herbe ist das Scheiden.'"

"I cannot sing that," said the mother, with a tremble in her voice.

"I wish Hildemund would come back and sing it again," said Rosilde, with childish unconsciousness of how painful a chord she had struck. "Do not you think he will? Look, how the fire leaps up; and that means a guest is near."

Magdalene lifted her eyes; they had grown heavy of late, and she was paler than of old. She saw her boy.

"Mother!" was all he could say for a while, and as for her the rush of joy left her speechless. But presently she put him a little way from her, and studied him with eyes full of love, which grew into wistful sadness the longer she looked at him. He

had come home, but was this youth, worn with toil and travel, all the buoyant gladness gone from lip and eye, her Hildemund? Through what dark scenes had he passed to change him thus, even in the first moment of his return! He smiled faintly, as if conscious of her thoughts, and turning to Rosilde, who stood gazing at him with a fulness of content which could await the moment of greeting patiently, he kissed her hands and said, "Ah, my sweet queen, I am not worthy to touch you; I have mingled in black doings since we two parted."

"You shall not say so!" she cried, with sudden passion, and throwing her arms round his neck she bent down his head till his lips met hers. "You are my knight now, for you saved me, you know."

Tears filled his eyes. "I will try to deserve so to be," he answered in a low voice, and sat down, with a weary pleasure in being tended by Magdalene, while his eyes dwelt on Rosilde, whom he would not allow to wait on him, noting how she had grown, and how the haughty and imperious little Burgfräulein had become amenable to discipline, though, as he could very well see, the old spirit was there still, ready to flash out. She was not one of those children whose joy overflows into words. Hildemund's return was absolute content to her; she wanted nothing more than to see him

sitting there; even if he did not speak. He had come back, and that was enough felicity.

Only very gradually did Magdalene learn what had befallen. Hardly even to her or Ulfric could Hildemund tell the tragedy of these months, or their crimes and suffering, and the utter downfall of all the hopes with which he had left the Ilzthal.

“By sword, and flame, and halter, and pike all is ended,” he said. “Of all who went from these valleys, not twenty will return—miner, serf, or free peasant, and Heaven have mercy on those who do!”

He spoke truly. By the time that the last effort at revolt was crushed, over a hundred thousand peasants had fallen, and serfdom settled down on Germany for two centuries and a half more.

“Deeds only fit for beasts and heathen have been done,” he said, presently; “yes, I know it, but the peasants were maddened by cruelty and savagery worse than their own. Who set the example? Aye, they have been like wild beasts freed from cages, it is most true, and they encountered foes yet wilder and more cruel. Blame not them, blame rather the lords who scorned their cry for justice in the years past.”

He had raised his head, and there was fire in his eyes now.

"Is that unhappy Kaspar yet alive?" Magdalene asked. It seems he mocked holy things by feigning to be a hermit, and so went and came unquestioned; but he can scarce have lived to see this downfall."

She stopped, startled by Hildemund's look of shuddering horror.

"He is dead then?" she added, fearfully.

"You have not heard? None brought the tale?" He paused; and could only continue with a great effort in broken sentences. "He was at Würzburg, and the citadel would have surrendered to us, but the townsfolk urged us to such hard terms that the garrison turned at bay, and held on until help came to them. A fatal delay! They fought gallantly, hurling stones and boiling pitch upon us, and taking right good aim; that was fair fighting, and one could go to it gladly. But we had not a leader among us, not one who knew aught of war, save Florian Geyer——"

"Geyer!"

"Aye, a cousin of our lord here, the one noble who joined us willingly, for as for Götz of the Iron Hand, he was half-hearted all along, and so were others whom we forced to make terms with us."

"But this Florian; wherefore did he renounce his friends and side with peasants?"

“None know; it may be he felt for our wrongs, but so fell was he, so pitiless to all nobles, that it would rather seem he had some private grudge against his peers. I cannot say. He would have made a noble leader, but all would lead and none obey, and Würzburg fell back into Bündisch hands, and in the assault Kaspar was taken.”

“And—then?”

“They chained him to a stake, and lit a slow fire, and so he died,” answered Hildemund, each word uttered between his teeth; “and some fifty knights looked on and laughed loud, and praised him who devised this brave deed. Who think you it was? Why, Wolfgang of Lichtenberg. Said he, Kaspar had burned his Schloss, and now he had the burning of him, and it should last by clock just as long as that of Burgstein did.”

“My God! can knights and Christians do such deeds!” exclaimed Magdalene, sick and pale with horror.

“Aye, many such,” Hildemund answered gloomily.

“Wolfgang did *that?*” Rosilde asked, with wide open eyes, “and the rest looked on and laughed?”

Hildemund signed assent.

“They are no knights and no Christians!” cried the child, glowing with indignation like a beautiful flame. “If nobles do such deeds I will not be one

of them! I will belong to you! I would rather be a serf than one of them who do such deeds—and laugh!"

"Had none any pity?" Magdalene asked at length.

"Aye—a soldier, who ran his pike through him, whereat the lords were sore chafed to have their sport spoiled."

"And this Florian Geyer?"

"He died by the hand of his brother-in-law, who came upon him in a lonely place, and bade him die there and so scape a halter."

"That was well," said the little Burgfräulein, with decision.

"Yes, it was well. Few fared so well," said Hildemund, with the same gloomy bitterness with which he had before spoken. He leaned his head on his hand, and his mother had no courage to ask further.

She took Rosilde away to her bed, longing to have her boy to herself, but it was not soon that she could soothe her enough to leave her, so full was she of passionate indignation and horror both at the deed itself, and that one she knew should have wrought it, and belted knights have looked on and deemed it sport. She had assuredly not been brought up to tender feeling for the oppressed.

Life in Burgstein had been rude enough, and the Freiherr's dealings with his people rough and high-handed, even when tempered by his jovial good humour. Blows were spared neither to man nor woman who fell under his displeasure, and many a man besides Kaspar had lost hand or eye for trifling faults, and there were black stories of deeds done when he was maddened by drink, which Rosilde happily knew nothing of. But whatever his faults, cold-blooded, deliberate love of cruelty was no sin of the Freiherr's, and Rosilde had inherited a temper which revolted from such deeds as she had this night heard of. She sobbed even when asleep, and murmured broken words, and once woke with a cry to Hildemund to save her from Wolfgang. Magdalene hushed her to sleep again, and at length could return to Hildemund, who sat just as she had left him, as if too wearied out in body and mind to stir. She sat down and waited for him to speak. By-and-by he did so.

"One of the cloisters burned was Marienau," he said abruptly.

"Marienau!"

"Aye. The prior was greatly hated, and his serfs flocked to meet us, and urged that the white wolves' lair should be destroyed, and the abbey prison broken open, for one or another had father,

or brother, or daughter there, and there were tales about the brotherhood which . . . well, it is a shame even to speak of them in your ears, sweet mother, but if they kept any of their vows, truly it was neither poverty nor chastity. But they made a stout defence; it was soon plain that the gates would not open for anything we could do, and some were for passing on, and losing no more time nor men, but all of a sudden smoke and flame rose up from within, and those who had been guarding the walls ran to quench the fire, and then it would seem some one opened the prison and let out the captives, so many that they overmastered those who yet held the gate, and let us in."

"What hand had kindled the fire?"

"None rightly knows, but some said afterwards it was a girl who had been carried off, on pretext of some misdeed, to the convent, and thus avenged herself—I know not. But there was a *mélée* in the court, and many fell on both sides, while the flames rushed up ever fiercer, and Prior Thomas and his monks were crazed with fear, and offered any ransom, so that their lives might be spared."

"What befell?" asked Magdalene, fearfully.

"Oh, they were not harmed," said Hildemund, with a tone of contempt; "no harm came to the shaven poll. The time had not yet come when

the peasants were mad with pillage and disappointment, and they did but sack the monastery, and empty the treasury and the cellars. But, mother, one died there whom I would have given my right hand to save, I think—the man who caused to make so brave a stand. You know whom I would say?"

"Not the good seneschal, oh, my son!"

He nodded gloomily. "I never thought he was yet there until in crossing the court a fallen man in my way spoke my name. 'Thou!' he said, and though I could do no other than I had done, it was like a dagger in my heart. Just that—no more but 'Thou!'—but I shall hear it, I think, when I come to die."

"That I well believe, my poor boy. Couldst thou do nought for the brave old man?"

"He was at the point of death, but as I raised him and laid his head on my breast he opened his eyes again, and spoke the name of Dornröschen. 'Right her——' he said, and that was his last word."

"She has lost a true friend, the poor child."

"He left me that to do," said Hildemund. "I will not rest until the day comes when Rosilde von Burgstein has her own again."

"A far off day, my boy."

"It will come, mother," he said, resolutely.

When Hildemund sought the inner room where he was accustomed to sleep, he looked round, asking himself whether it was months or years since he last was there. Nothing was altered in it, and yet all looked strange to him. Was it that he himself was so changed?

It was in this room that Magdalene kept her simple store of remedies—the dried herbs, hung in bundles from nails and pegs; the salves and drinks in glass bottles and earthenware jars, set on shelves; her lint and her bandages. Had Magdalene been a man, her title would have been that of Laborant, a name given to those who were apothecary and physician in one. Her simple skill sufficed for the needs of those days, when the healing art was little studied, and the main business of a leech was to heal wounds and bruises.

Here and there the antlers of a deer, shot by Kilian Dahn, projected from the wall; Hildemund hung up his cap and doublet upon one, and threw himself down on his bed, but sleep would not come. The wild scenes through which he had been passing rose up before him; cries and moans seemed to fill his ears, the shout of triumph and the curse of hate rang in them, mingled with calls for help and mercy, and he could have believed that the red light of flames glowed through his

closed eyelids. The night was perfectly still and very dark; all round the house was unbroken silence. This in itself seemed to keep him awake and on the alert. A shuddering horror possessed him more and more as he thought of the fate of Kaspar, and the scarcely less horrible end of other leaders in the rebellion who had fallen into the hands of the nobles, and his mind was full of questionings as to his own future, and fears lest his share in the revolt should involve his mother. Despondency overwhelmed him as he felt that there was small hope but that something would be known of his share in the attack on Burgstein, or at least that he had joined the peasant army, and though he was free, and owned house and land, that would make against rather than for him. He tossed restlessly, until the door softly opened, and Magdalene, who had sat in the next room lost in thought over past and future, amid which the sweet and mournful air which Ulfric had taught to Hildemund, "O wie herbe ist das Scheiden," strangely mingled, came in. She held a lamp, which she shaded with her long, slender fingers as she stood gazing at her boy with one of those looks of which some mothers have the secret. He had closed his eyes, but now opened them and met hers. How fair she was, he thought, how brave and tender and noble!

"Mother," he exclaimed passionately, as she bent over him, "if you should suffer for what I have done!"

"Think not of that, my son; I can only suffer much through you. It is of your danger we must think. Melchior, who was here to-day for salve for his wounds, says it is rumoured that the bailiff of Burgstein has returned, and though Lucas, the Geyer bailiff, be kind and merciful, compared to him of Burgstein, between them there will be a stern reckoning. My boy, you cannot tarry here."

"I know it," he said, raising himself on his elbow, and looking round wistfully; "and if I could, nevermore could I take up the old life after these last months. But you, mother—and Dornröschen?"

"If need be, we can go to Ulm, to mine uncle, Philip Welser, who lives there with his son-in-law, my cousin, Jacob Paumgärtner, who married his one daughter, once my little playmate."

"Not to Nüremberg?"

"No. Dornröschen needs must pass as a Dahn, and would find cold welcome there, and in my mother's eyes I am yet but a girl, though I have such a tall son," said Magdalene, smiling, "and she would exact an obedience which I could not render, yet might hardly deny without breach of duty. She would fain blot out the name of Dahn."

“I understand,” said the boy, flushing hotly. “Doubtless the proud Paumgärtners were sorely humbled when one of their kin wedded a man without name or station.”

“They were,” answered Magdalene, calmly. “The *Geschlechter** of Nuremberg hold themselves well-nigh the equals of any nobles in Germany, and unworldly as my father was, he could ill have brooked my marriage, but that while Kilian lay sick in our house he won his heart, and when Graf Geyer urged his suit, or rather commanded me to wed him, my father could give me ungrudgingly.”

“But not my grandmother?”

Magdalene paused, and shadows of past pain crossed her face.

“How should she?” she said at last, “she looked on things far otherwise than my father; to her his carelessness of pomp or success, or the world’s good word, seemed poor-spirited and scornworthy, and until our town was taken, and life, goods, honour at the mercy of our victors, she had held her head higher than any among its dames. My father, too, held high place in the council; all men knew his uprightness and esteemed his opinion. Sore humiliation it was to be helpless before a haughty conqueror, and owe the sparing of our goods to his

* Patrician burgher families.

protection, given because his banner-bearer had been borne wounded within our doors."

"But you, mother—you at least?—"

"I had prayed with all my soul to be delivered from a marriage which my mother had planned for me, yet when deliverance came thus I shrank and feared, though while I tended Kilian I had seen somewhat of how true and loyal a heart was his. Ah, he loved me with a great love, my Kilian! You will never know, my son, what you lost in losing your father. Sometimes it seems as if we had been parted for a lifetime, sometimes but a day; and yet I think we are never far apart. He comes to me, not when I will, but often when I least expect it I know he is with me. But you—alas! you can scarce remember him!"

She spoke with deep regret.

"I miss no one since I have you!" Hildemund exclaimed.

"Alas! what can I do in this strait? I see no light, no leading. I had a great hope, but that I have laid down; you are not called to follow in the steps of Berthold von Rohrbach. Where will you go, my boy? To Ulm?"

"Will you too go thither?"

"Nay, not yet. I am greatly needed here; there is an evil time coming on the valley, and all I can

do with medicine and money will be too little. And Ulfric—I would not leave the poor leper desolate; he has missed you grievously, though Herr Basil has shown him kindness."

"I must see him ere I go. Mother, I shall seek the Duke of Würtemberg."

"It would seem you love falling causes," she answered, with a faint smile; "but men speak much ill of this Duke—the slayer of von Hutten!"

"Much that is false!" exclaimed Hildemund; "his friends are few and his foes many, and they fight against him not only with sword but with pen, and tongues, blacker than their ink!"

"Think you he will welcome one who has shared in the rebellion?"

"Nay, have you not heard how he appealed to the peasants, telling them he was a poor banished man, and that if they would have him as a brother, he would stand by them for life and death? Yes, and when George Truchsess called the Würtembergers to fight against him, they answered that Würtemberg spears knew not how to pierce Ulrich! And he would have recovered his duchy had not those hounds of Swiss failed him once more. Scarce could he get back to Hohentwiel with the Bauern-Georg upon his heels!"

Magdalene had learned from returned fugitives

that this was the nickname given to the butcher of the peasants, George Truchsess.

“Now Archduke Ferdinand has filled Würtemberg with his soldiers, and set the Truchsess over the land,” Hildemund continued. “But one day the Duke will have his own again—he is a noble lord to strike for—and when he is again in Würtemberg, he will do justice to Dornröschen.”

“Ah!” said Magdalene, comprehending, and she sighed. This then was the work to which Hildemund would devote himself—this, not that to which she had silently dedicated him from childhood, and, as she had fondly hoped, trained him, when she had told him, even in his boyhood, tales of Berthold von Rohrbach and his holy brotherhood, and seen his eyes glow and kindle as he listened. She had thought that the scenes through which he had been going would have deepened the desire to comfort and uphold the oppressed and sad, but it was not so. The boy had as it were manhood thrust suddenly on him before he was ready—he had lost his old self, and yet did not know what to do with the stormy chaos of feelings, desires, possibilities, which he found within him. Magdalene understood enough of his state to know that she must trust him to higher guidance than her own, and so leave him. But her heart was very sore as she owned it.

The sympathy between mother and son, however, was too deep for Hildemund not to know much of how she felt, and he drew her hand to his cheek, and said, "Mother, I would not disappoint you, could I do otherwise. But it seems to me as if all my heart was on fire—as if I must be astir and never rest until I had mastered myself—I do not know myself, mother!"

"I understand, my boy."

"To-morrow I will seek the Pfarrer," he went on. "How has he taken all that has befallen?"

"At first with hot displeasure, the hotter that he found the people had read his teaching of brotherly love and the rights of a free man in Christ their own way, so that they held him as upholding the rebellion, and he spoke and preached hard words and pitiless; but the sight of Jobst and Melchior, returning brandmarked and with nose and ears slit, and sore wounded besides, changed his tone. He is one ever borne away by feeling: a matter will never lie four-square to him—one side or more will always be unequal. He too loves falling causes," she added, smiling a little.

"I heard somewhat of him when I was at Würzburg. It seems he is of a good family, who early got him high place among the parish clergy, but he never lived a worldly life like the most of these,

and they were ill-pleased thereat, since his ways were a rebuke to them, especially to Bishop Conrad—a silly old man, who loves wine and ladies and rich feeding. But the poor and the townsfolk flocked to his church—he always preached there, and would have no Vicarius, like others; so by-and-by there was a cry of heresy raised, specially by the Dominicans, who were jealous of him, and he was exiled. The people would have forced Bishop Conrad to keep him, but he came away secretly, out of obedience. But he is no Lutheran, sure?"

"It may be he teaches like Luther without knowing it."

"The Bishop would never think of him again, but there are those at his elbow to egg him on, and it is said that all he does here is noted and known at Würzburg. Will you not tell him, mother?"

"Doubtless he knows it, and would but speak the more plainly for it."

"And poor Ulfred?" Hildemund asked, after a moment. "Have you seen him of late? His heart went with us, and his Twelve Articles were our war-cry. Ah, had the peasants but been content with them, or had he but been like others, so that he could have led us! How he tasted of bitterness that he could have no part with us! But no—the

army would not endure discipline from any—Florian Geyer learned that."

"How should men who have known but slavery learn to bear liberty, unless through a forty years' trial in the wilderness?"

"The few who had foresight—the burghers and others who joined us—could get no hearing, and so all was lost, and I shall never see our peasants free," Hildemund said with a groan. "No, not I, nor any living. But *one* wrong shall be set right, if I give my life for it."

CHAPTER IV.

It was with a feeling that all which he had to do in the Ilzthal must be done quickly, that Hildemund made his way to the village to seek for Herr Basil. Dornröschen was with him, for she had gathered that he would soon leave her, and would not let him go out of her sight. So many violent changes had befallen her in the last months that an unspoken terror had haunted her lest something fresh should occur and tear her from the only people she had to love, and fling her back into the hands of Wolfgang and old Julchen. With childish reserve she kept silence on her fears; but she would never be left alone, and showed herself as little as possible when Magdalene's patients came to the house. With Hildemund she had an unreasoning sense of safety; her fears were lulled by his presence. Magdalene herself was going to a distant hut where fever had broken out, and gladly let her accompany him, the more that the belief that the little Burgfräulein had perished, and that Frau Dahn had a niece living with her, was entirely

accepted in the valley, and no one was likely to identify her.

Hildemund had much on his mind which he meant to tell Herr Basil that was no tale for Rosilde's ears. The wild story of all these months, and this rapid passage from a blithe, contented boyhood to half-comprehended manhood, in which he felt as if he had lost all his bearings, could be told to none but a confessor, or to a trusty friend like Ulfric, who seemed to Hildemund, in his brave submission, his keen and generous sympathy for the oppressed, nobler than many a canonised saint. But Dornröschen could be left with the priest's old deaf housekeeper, while Hildemund spoke with her master after mass, which he looked forward to serving as he had sometimes formerly done. The thought of thus approaching the altar in the well-known church was full of refreshment and soothing to him, and he began to feel as if the last half year were almost a dream, and far behind him, when he went along the moist forest paths, with Dornröschen holding his hand, and looking with satisfied eyes into his face. She did not say much; she was a silent child for the most part, contented with the presence of those dear to her, and she had learned to love Hildemund with a fervour such as no one else had called forth. Even when scarcely

beyond babyhood she had looked for his coming to the castle, and regarded him as her especial property. Her father she had been fond of; for her mother she had never cared at all. Bärbele she had ruled over, and liked in a domineering way; but Walther the seneschal she had loved, and next to him, Hildemund, who played with her, told her stories, let her ride on Hundolf while he held her,—who was always gentle and courteous to her, and though tall and strong, never used his strength unjustly. Now Walther had gone away, and Hildemund had no rival. Each day of his absence she had missed him more, and even Magdalene had hardly wearied so much for his return. He was her knight, her champion and deliverer, in whose eyes, as she somehow very well knew, she could do no wrong. All her strong, childish romance gathered round Hildemund.

They were in time for mass, but a shock of disappointment awaited Hildemund when he advanced with his request.

“Are you worthy of this, my son?” Herr Basil said, looking at him with questioning eyes. “Are hands and heart so clean that you dare meddle with holy things before confession and absolution?”

From the sternness of his tone no one could have guessed how rejoiced he was at the sight of

the truant, returned in safety. The severity was born of gladness, but Hildemund could not know that.

“So be it, then, honoured sir,” he answered, all the quiet content which had come into his eyes in the forest going out of them. Dornröschen gave a fiery look at Herr Basil, and slipped her hand into that of Hildemund. He knew she meant that whoever might blame or rebuke him, she was on his side.

They knelt together—the sole worshippers present. Pfarrer Basil approached after mass, and was about to bid Rosilde seek his old housekeeper, when the little acolyte who had taken the place which Hildemund had longed to fill, came running back aghast, and a wild clamour of shouts and wailing, threats and cries arose without.

“Stay here! I command it,” said the priest, grasping Hildemund as he started forward. “What is it, Dami?”

“Alack, reverend sir, there are men-at-arms on the green, and I saw the bailiff of Burgstein, and the villagers are all there, and—— only hearken!” and, pale with affright, he escaped out of the church.

“If the bailiff be there with soldiers, it is to take vengeance on the village,” said Hildemund,

full of wrath and alarm. "Yet what can the people suffer more?"

"I must forth and stand between these unhappy ones and further ill," said Herr Basil. "Show not yourself if you value your safety or that of this child."

He hurried out, and Dornröschen looked up fearfully into the pale, set face of her companion.

"What will they do?" she asked, as the tumult suddenly ceased, and then a shrill cry of women's voices rose up, wild with despair and anguish, and at the same moment a sudden light glowed on the windows of the building. In spite of prohibition and danger, Hildemund sprang to the door and looked out. The green was covered with men, women, and children, huddled together, and surrounded by men-at-arms with levelled pikes, and the village was in flames from end to end. This was the punishment meted out to the Ilzthal. Wolfgang had kept his word.

"My God!" was all that Hildemund could say.

They perceived Herr Basil pleading vehemently with the bailiff and the leader of the band, regardless of rough answer and even menace, and saw him point now to the helpless throng, now to the burning houses, where were all the goods they possessed, and the destruction of which left them with-

out shelter in the coming winter. The flames lighted up the blank, despairing faces of the villagers, and turned the stream red as it flowed below, sending up hissing, spluttering jets of water as burning brands and beams crashed and fell into its bed. In an incredibly short time the wooden houses were only a heap of ashes. "Remember Burgstein!" shouted the bailiff. "Now, Balthasar, make an end of the work."

A fresh wail and shriek arose from the women as the soldiers seized on some half-dozen men pointed out by the bailiff and bound their hands. They made no resistance, only turning looks of miserable appeal to Herr Basil.

"Hold!" he cried, his voice ringing like a trumpet; "as you would yourselves find mercy hereafter, give them time to confess and be shriven. Stand back, I command you."

"Two minutes each while we knot the halters," answered the leader of the soldiers sullenly, with a doubtful look at the bailiff; and the men-at-arms drew back, and allowed the priest to approach.

"What—what are they going to do?" Rosilde whispered in terror.

"Do not ask," said Hildemund, in an agony of impotent grief and horror. "Come away; come back

into the church. This is the work of Wolfgang von Lichtenberg!"

There was a dead silence now, ominous and heart-broken; then came the tramp of many footsteps towards a group of old trees whose branches stretched over the green; then a shout of brutal triumph, overpowering the sound of weeping. Herr Basil came into the church, not crushed and overwhelmed, as Hildemund, who had started up to meet him, had expected; pale as marble, indeed, but erect, strung with intense feeling, his dark eyes ablaze. He did not even seem to see the two who awaited him.

"Lord of justice, hear the poor when he crieth and there is no helper!" he exclaimed, standing before the altar, and stretching out his hand. "Suffer not the cruel to ride over their necks! Shall such iniquity be wrought and Thou not avenge, O God Almighty?" And then, seeing Hildemund, "One victim at least I can save; none know you are here. Get to my house while none have time or thought for you, and at nightfall get you hence to the first refuge we can devise."

He spoke with feverish energy. Hildemund felt Rosilde's fingers close suddenly on his; she looked from one to the other, her eyes searching their faces.

"Reverend sir," Hildemund said, pressing her closer to him, "how could I leave my mother and Dornröschen here while such deeds are wrought?"

"Your presence would be fatal to them; you hence, what pretext could any have for harming them?"

"Pretext!" exclaimed Hildemund, with keen bitterness.

"I know—I know they would need none. But Frau Magdalene—so beloved, such a fountain of help to all around—she at least must be safe!"

He spoke with vehemence, meant rather to convince himself than his hearers.

"None are safe!" answered Hildemund. "What have those now wailing without this church done? those children, and women, and old folks?"

"Let me go and tell the bailiff he shall be hung to the highest tree in the Thuringian forest if he dare to harm Frau Magdalene!" burst in Rosilde.

"Hush, hush, child, you are no Burgfräulein now," said Pfarrer Basil, impatiently. "Listen to reason, Hildemund. What could your mother wish so much as to know you safe? You are no serf, I know, and on Geyer lands, but if any word gets abroad as to Burgstein all is lost, and even as it is perchance the bailiff of Geyer may treat you as a

rebel. Is there none who at need can speak a word for your mother?"

"The Geyer'schen bailiff's wife sent for Muhme while you were away, because she was sick, and we went to her and cured her," said Rosilde.

"Ah, is it so? That should count now. Get to my house, Hildemund, I tell you. I will see this little one under your mother's care, and seek the bailiff's wife as soon as may be, so that she may speak for Dame Magdalene if evil come."

But Hildemund was unpersuadable. To flee and leave his mother's fate uncertain he could not bring himself to do.

"She must go to Ulm," he said. "Then, she gone, I will seek Duke Ulrich. But until then I cannot and will not go."

"And meanwhile, headstrong boy?"

"I can hide in the Eschthal—I could not go hence without seeing Ulfric. The nights are not yet so cold that it is a hardship to sleep out of doors."

"At least remain under my roof until nightfall. Now, my child, come."

"Hildemund—I shall see Hildemund again?" asked Rosilde, with a quivering lip.

"Yes, yes, if all go well."

"Yes, my sweet one," said Hildemund, kissing

her tearful eyes, "and while I am gone be good in my place to my mother."

"I will," said the child, gravely, and crossing herself as she spoke, as if registering a vow. Herr Basil hurried her away.

"By the side door, Hildemund, to my house. It is empty—my poor old housekeeper is with her daughter." He shuddered, and a look of great exhaustion came over him, as if the strength left by intense excitement were leaving him, but he roused himself with an effort. "I must speak a word, ere I go, to my people," he said. "Although no burial be granted to these poor sufferers for crimes they scarce understood, come what may of it I will read some of those holy words which the Church gives her departed. Await me but a few moments while I tell those mourners this."

Hildemund sat down and drew Dornröschen to him, clasping her fast and close in silence. He had no heart to speak. She laid her head on his breast, and so they sat until Herr Basil returned. "Come!" he said, with the same look and tone of one lifted out of himself and beyond all ordinary conditions. "I must hasten back—that consolation at least shall be theirs. The cruelty of man may do its worst, but the Church shall not fail them. Come!"

Magdalene was not unprepared for the grim

tale. Rumours had been brought to the hut where she had carried her ministrations, which sent her home full of dread, but Pfarrer Basil found her almost as unpersuadable as Hildemund. To think of her own safety at a time when such a flood of misery had broken loose over her poor neighbours was intolerable to her, at least until her safety was unmistakably threatened, but she laid her earnest commands on Hildemund to seek Hohentwiel at once. They met in the night near the leper's cave; Hildemund might not enter it, but Ulfric's neighbourhood was no small comfort to him. To Ulfric he could pour out all which he had purposed to tell Basil, and more yet, for Ulfric had stimulated and shared his plans and hopes, and viewed the issue of the struggle with grief far beyond Hildemund's. His thoughts and plans, passed on by Hildemund to Kaspar, and by him to other leaders, had, though Ulfric did not know it at the time, shaped all the earlier schemes of the peasants in Thuringia, and if he escaped in the day of vengeance he would owe it to the humiliation of being a leper, on whom none wasted a suspicion.

In the dim twilight they spoke long together, heart to heart, these two, the boy and the leper, whose friendship had been so strangely close, and who might scarce hope to meet again. The one

hoped to make himself a name and right a great wrong, and if the Duke never regained Würtemberg, other possibilities lay in the future; but, for the other, life was closing in more and more, although he could not hope to die, for he was full of vigour and ardent impulses, torturing him in this existence void of hope or any future, yet always lengthening out, only varied by paroxysms of despair and pain so keen that they seemed almost as much bodily as mental. And now Hildemund was going away, and Magdalene would be driven away too, and the child who had brightened some desolate hours for him—all would go. Only to him never any change came, except for the worse. Ulfric fought out that conflict as he had done many others, in his own breast, in silence. Only he said, "My songs will reach no further than the Eschthal now, Hildemund." And Hildemund knew what it was to him to lose that link with the world, to be deprived of the deep joy—the one joy which the leper had known since the curse fell on him—of learning that his sweet gift had consoled the sorrowful and heightened the joy of the glad.

At midnight Magdalene came to the Eschthal. She could not leave Dornröschen in her empty house, and brought her too. There was much to say, much to debate, for means of communication

would be well-nigh impossible; in places far more on the beaten track than these valleys letters came and went very rarely, delivered by private hand or through some favourable opportunity, and in the disorganised state of the country such would be more rare than ever. Most unlikely was it that Hildemund would be able to send word whether he reached Hohentwiel, or what reception he met with there, and it would be a long and tedious matter to send a despatch to Ulm, warning the kinsfolk there that Magdalene might need the shelter of their roof. Hildemund would hear of nothing touching himself until she had promised to do this, and to hold herself ready for speedy departure in case of need. Money she did not lack. The fortune inherited from her father was ample for wants far greater than hers and those of her poor neighbours; and she brought Hildemund a purse and a doublet in which were stitched broad pieces enough to last him for many a day. Many words, "which never were the last," were spoken before that final parting, when all the formal respect of the day, observed even between the nearest and dearest, broke down, and Magdalene could hardly give the blessing which Hildemund knelt to ask, for weeping. Rosilde stood by, quite silent; Ulfric chancing to look at her, was struck with surprise and pity by the unchildlike

depth of pain on her face, and the equally unchild-like self-control, but he could not, as another might, soothe her by touch or caress, and he was afraid to trust his voice. A rustle and movement in the wood overhead made them all start, and then draw a deep breath of relief as they recognised Herr Basil, wan and weary with the terrible strain of that day, but making his way down the steep cliff path to bless and bid Hildemund farewell. A great rush of gratitude filled Magdalene's heart at the sight of him.

"Ah, dear sir, this is good of you," she murmured, and the loving and thankful glances from all the eyes turned to him were balm to his heart.

"Let us pray together," he said; and in the lonely valley, under the cold clear skylight they knelt and prayed, and the full hearts were lightened and strengthened by the words which flowed from the very soul of the priest whose voice was speaking for them all. But none were so moved and stirred as Ulfrik. None else thought of it in that supreme moment, but to him this making one among worshippers for the first time since he had been dead among the living and cut off from holy ordinances —this joining as one of a Christian congregation, and not merely on bare, far-off sufferance, was wonderfully sweet and strange. A thrill ran through

him of half-formed hope, that a miracle might be wrought on his behalf, though he knew all the time that no leper was ever healed, none had ever, since days of visible Divine interposition, come back to claim his place again, any more than a ghost from the grave. Yet he could not feel again quite the same numbing despair as before.

The prayer ended with words of absolution and peace. Rising, the priest said, "Now let us part, dear friends, and pray ever for one another, so that when the Angel gathers the supplications lying on the heavenly altar ours may be offered up together. Delay not, dear son," he added to Hildemund, "for it is said that to-morrow the bailiff of Burgstein will search these woods with dogs to discover any fugitives who lurk there. God help them, for man has no pity!" he added with shuddering emotion, reflected in the faces of his hearers.

"My mother, Herr Pfarrer—she likes ill to leave the valley," said Hildemund.

"I think she has no need; that much good news at least I have to tell you. I have seen the Scheurlin"—it was thus that the wife of Jacob Scheurl, the Geyer bailiff, was called—"and she was forward to declare that none—least of all her husband—would harm Frau Magdalene. But she said plainly that thou, my son, wert best away."

"Dear sir! how I thank you!" said Hildemund; and then, turning to Rosilde, he said fast and low as he kissed both her little cold hands, "Farewell, my sweet; one day you shall again be a Burgfräulein."

"No, not that, I do not want that—only come back," she answered, looking up with such a wistful though tearless gaze that his lips quivered, and he turned hastily away with "My mother remember."

"Yes;" and passing to Magdalene's side she took her hand. The poor mother had other things to think of than Rosilde, yet the soft touch comforted her a little. And thus, with more of hope and comfort than they could have thought possible, the last farewells were spoken, and Hildemund went on his way.

CHAPTER V.

HILDEMUND's journey by night was through the forest, where the shadows gathered more and more thickly, and a shiver came over the trees as the wind began to rise. Now and then a jay screamed suddenly, but mostly all was still except for the rustle and sway of the boughs and the sound of running water. By noon he was far on his way to the fortress which Duke Ulrich had secured just when his enemies believed he had not a stronghold left. To that lofty and impregnable eyrie he had retreated when the defeat of the peasants' cause once more destroyed his hopes. As Hildemund had said, Würtemberg lay more helplessly than ever in the grasp of Archduke Ferdinand, to whom his brother, Charles V., had made it over. Once more the banished Duke had to abide his time, with the small knot of faithful friends who shared his fortunes.

Hildemund's journey was through a hundred dangers, for peasants, maddened with despair, were lurking in the forest, ready to fall on anyone whom

they could plunder, and even if the password of the Bundschuh might defend him from these, there were swarms of vagabonds and robbers who, even a dozen years later, made travelling still unsafe. It was fortunate for him that he espied in the course of the day a party of merchants, going with a strong escort, who willingly allowed him to join them when he explained that he was carrying letters to the abbot of Gscheidt, from the Pfarrer of his own valley. The addition of this tall, fair-faced lad, well dressed and well armed, and of courteous bearing, was very welcome; they lent him a spare horse, and he journeyed with them, choking back as best he could his feelings when the war formed, as it constantly did, the sole subject of conversation, regarded of course with all the narrowness, pitilessness, and triumph in the issue which those would feel whose trade had been arrested, whose city had been pillaged, and who had seen those whom they utterly despised suddenly raised into masters and foes. The country through which they travelled bore ghastly traces of cruelties exercised on both sides—ruined cloisters, more than one castle destroyed by fire, towns with breaches in their walls and shattered gates, which workmen were hastily repairing; lands neglected and uncultivated. Here and there burning huts showed that the punishment

of Burgstein was no extraordinary one. In other years at this season the harvests would just have been gathered in, cattle would have fed in the meadows, and the air would have been musical with the sound of their bells and call of herdsmen. But now the silence was unbroken. In many a village the doors were open, the houses empty, the churches deserted, the bells silent in their towers, the garlands on the graves withered. Now and then a dog ran out and barked, scanning the passers-by vainly and wistfully, and, seeing they were strangers, dropped back, with drooping ears and tail. Once they passed a spot where not long before some deadly struggle had taken place, for mailed men lay thickly on the ground, mingled with peasants whose dead hands still grasped bill-hooks, scythes, and flails, as they lay with a strange look of mortal hate on their pale faces. The ravens flapped heavily up as the merchant-party rode hastily by, forcing their frightened horses to pass the corpses and the dead steeds lying among them. The very face of the land was a book written all over with a tale of lamentation and mourning and woe. There were not wanting signs that the old rule had begun again, for in some places peasants were toiling, watched by a bailiff with a strong whip or heavy staff, laid plentifully about the shoulders of the weak

or unwilling labourer, whether man or woman; and there were a great many women at work impressed, doubtless, to replace husbands or sons, absent, or perhaps lying dead somewhere, with both hands severed from the wrists, or too cruelly mutilated to work again if life remained in them. Many and many a tree bore the like ghastly fruit to those on the Burgstein green. Hildemund had to set his teeth and ride as far apart from his companions as he dared, struggling with the grief and indignation within him, and ever asking himself how his mother was faring, and Dornröschen, until he could hardly restrain himself from retracing his steps at all hazards. He was glad to part from the merchants at Gscheidt, and seek Pfarrer Basil's friend, who received him hospitably. A day or two later he saw the strong walls of Hohentwiel rise far overhead, and knew that he was beyond the reach of immediate danger.

But before Herr Basil learned from his friend that Hildemund had prospered, Magdalene was far from the Ilzthal. A few days after Hildemund's departure the wife of the Geyer bailiff appeared at the presbytery, the only house left standing in Burgstein, with a basket of eggs and apples for the priest, offerings such as any of his flock who had them to give were bound to present. He had been

ceaselessly occupied in trying to house and provide for the homeless, heartbroken villagers. As many as his own small dwelling could contain were there, the oldest, feeblest, and the sick; others he had bestowed in the church, but until the bailiff would give leave for wood to be used, nothing could be reconstructed. Not a bough might be cut without permission, nor wood taken to replace the tools burned; and had not Herr Basil and Magdalene both contributed largely from their private means, and sent to a distance for food, famine would have been added to all other misfortunes. "Die Scheurlin" looked pitifully around her.

"This is a welcome gift," said Herr Basil. "We need all, and more than all, which kind souls can bring us."

She glanced about; there was no possibility of a word in private.

"You are most welcome, honoured sir," she said, "and I would it were better worth your acceptance. And touching that package which you wished to send by my brother, if it can be ready by the morn we have a messenger at your service."

She glanced up, and their eyes met.

"Is there such haste?" he asked, with as much indifference as he could assume.

"Yes, sir, we are sending to ask orders how to

deal with the serfs on the Geyer'sche lands; but 'tis like my lord will leave it to Jacob, for he puts much trust in him," she said, with wisely pride.

"God grant it, for he will be merciful, I know."

"Graf Lichtenberg came yesterday, but he brought no commands," she added.

"So!" said Herr Basil.

"Yes, and Kunz with him. It seems he is greatly troubled about the little Burgfräulein, who is said"—she made a brief, significant pause—"to have perished in the sack of Burgstein, and he would learn all he can thereof."

"Ah! saith he so?"

"Nay, sir, the Graf is not one to speak to us of such matters; but Kunz will at times babble in his cups, and he let fall somewhat yesternight while drinking with my husband."

Herr Basil stood thinking. "All say the child is dead," he said; "wherefore should the Graf doubt it?"

"Belike he would but be sure of the thing."

"There be none who can tell him one way or the other."

"The Graf is as keen as a lime-dog on the trail; he is a fearful man to deal with," she answered, turning pale. "And now about the package, reverend sir."

He understood her very well. She owed her life to Magdalene's care, and now was putting means of flight within her reach.

"I am sore pressed for time, as you see. But it may be Frau Dahn would profit by this occasion if you could go so far out of your way as to tell her thereof."

"I—I—my husband will think I tarry long," she said, embarrassed, and he perceived that though the bailiff might favour Magdalene's flight, he did not wish to be involved in any danger. Her face suddenly changed, and she shrank within the church, and busied herself in dividing a cake which she took from her pocket between two little half-starved children. Herr Basil instantly saw the cause of her change of countenance: Graf von Lichtenberg was riding into the village, and looking round with an unmoved yet displeased glance over the burned houses. Seeing the priest in the doorway of the church he rode up and saluted him courteously. He was well aware that even in exile and disgrace this was not a man to be despised. Never apt at concealing his feelings, it was with the utmost difficulty that Basil could suppress his aversion to this murderer, whose guilt he knew by a channel which sealed his lips. He stood pale, impatient, visibly eager to have done with whatever was to pass between them.

“Were it not well,” began the Graf, casting a glance past him into the church, which seemed to take in every one huddled there, “that these poor wretches rather rebuilt their dwellings than herded here like sheep?”

“Awaiting their butcher,” was on the priest’s lips, but he suppressed it, feeling the necessity of being conciliatory for his people’s sake.

“Assuredly, if they have leave so to do, and may furnish themselves with materials,” he said.

“It shall be seen to; the land has lain already over half a year untilled,” said the Graf, and Herr Basil perceived that he was, unlike most of his degree, too far-sighted to prefer vengeance to self-interest.

“The village was burned unknown to him—Wolfgang’s hand was in that deed,” was the conclusion the priest came to. “The worst for my people is over.”

As if responding to his thoughts, which were, indeed, plainly enough to be read in his face, the Graf continued, “What is done is done; we have now to reconstruct. As you may think, it has been impossible to come hither since I left Italy, but at the first moment I have hastened to learn what indeed was the fate of my ward and cousin, Rosilde

von Burgstein. I would fain believe she escaped in that evil hour when the castle was sacked?"

A faint and dubious smile curved Herr Basil's lips.

"My son, and Kunz my man, tell me she was in charge of a woman belonging to the household —Julchen I think they called her. Is she here?"

"She is," said the priest, briefly, and pointed to an old crone, sitting just within the doorway, her hands locked round her knees, as she sat rocking herself and muttering ceaselessly.

"That hag?" exclaimed the Graf, startled out of his smooth and polished tone.

"Just so, Herr Graf. Such wits as terror left her after the burning of the castle, quitted her altogether when your bailiff hung her son before her eyes, and struck her on the head because she clung to him."

There was a dangerous, unconscious triumph in look and tone which did not escape von Lichtenberg. "The girl lives, and he knows it," was his thought, and raising his voice so as to be heard by all near, he said, "If there be any here who can tell me how the band who sacked Burgstein found entrance, ten gold pieces are theirs, and a free pardon."

He paused. Basil was taken by surprise; this

was not what he had expected, but he immediately saw how it bore on the matter in hand, and awaited what answer would be made in anxiety not lost on the Graf. No one moved or spoke; terror at the presence of their lord, despair at what they had already suffered, made everyone dumb.

“Hear, all,” he repeated, “on the word of a knight and noble I will give ten golden crowns and pardon, though he threw the first brand, to him who reveals how he entered Burgstein.”

Again silence answered, but there was a slight thrill and stir among the listeners. He smiled and looked at Herr Basil, who met his dark and subtle eyes without blenching.

“Whoso would gain the reward may seek me at Schloss Geyer,” he added, and, bowing to the priest, he rode slowly away.

His departure broke the spell which held all dumb. A low whisper ran through the church, heads were bent close together, muttered remarks were interchanged. Even the sick, lying on heaps of dry leaves, roused themselves.

“Forget not, my children, that there is a curse on gold gained by the harm of another,” said Herr Basil, emphatically, and the whisper ceased, but presently began again. Christine Scheurlin came to his side.

"Reverend sir, I will do your bidding," she whispered. "Many must know who showed the secret way, and once the Graf hears that, he will piece all together. It is such a great bribe to these poor folks—they may not betray what they know to-day or to-morrow, but sooner or later they will."

He signed assent in deep anxiety, and she took her way towards Schloss Geyer, but turned out of it to visit the Bannwart's cottage. Magdalene had been hardly less occupied than Herr Basil; heavy as her own load of care was, she could think of little but the dire distress around her, and Dornröschen had lent all her little aid to mend and make garments and prepare salves and potions, identifying herself with Magdalene and the sufferers in a resolute, energetic way which struck Magdalene, little time as she had to observe it. Christine Scheurlin found her at work on clothes for a family who had lost all their possessions. She looked up with a pleased welcome as the bailiff's wife appeared, but did not cease from her task.

"All, and more than all, is needed," she said.

"Alas! I know it; I have come from the village."

"You do not come, I trust, to seek remedies for yourself?"

"No, thanks to you, I am strong and well again. But, O dear Frau, I bring heavy tidings."

“My son!”

“Not of Hildemund?” Magdalene and Rosilde exclaimed together.

“No, no, I have heard nought of him; I meant not to scare you thus—and the little one too—” she answered, struck with the terror in Rosilde’s wide open eyes. “But Graf Lichtenberg is come, and he seeks on all sides to know the truth of the tale that the little Burgfräulein perished in the sacking of the castle.”

“Muhme! let us go away!” cried Rosilde, throwing herself on Frau Magdalene.

“Fear not any word of mine,” said Christine, seeing Magdalene’s alarm at the child’s self-betrayal. “You whose tender care saved my life, and in whose arms my little baby died—— I knew by the Fräulein’s looks and ways long ago who she must be, but I and my husband and brother would sooner die than betray you. But there are others . . . You must hence at once; the Herr Pfarrer bade me tell you so.”

“Now! in this time of need!”

“We cannot go when we are undoing some of the harm these cruel lords work,” said Rosilde, forgetting her terror, and bringing a smile to the lips of “Die Scheurlin,” who could not guess how deep a feeling underlay the childish importance.

"You must;" and Christine unfolded her plan. Magdalene must collect such few possessions as could be carried on horseback, and accompany Christine's brother to Dornstadt, the nearest large town.

"All which you leave here I will fetch and keep for you," she said; "from Dornstadt surely you can reach some refuge where the Graf cannot track you. Only linger not, I beseech you."

Magdalene was forced to admit that danger was imminent, but she felt such reluctance and regret at going that had it not been for Rosilde's sake she could not have torn herself away.

"To leave all my sick thus and now! not even a word of farewell!" she said. The rest of the day and part of the night was spent in hurried arrangements, so as to be ready to go by dawn. She hoped that Herr Basil would come and bid her farewell, but he feared the Graf's spies, and did not stir out of the village. Ulfrik she must see if no one else ere she went away. She took her herb-box as an excuse for being late abroad, but she was deaf to Rosilde's supplications to accompany her. She left her locked in the sound sleep of childhood, and exchanged her sad last words with the leper while night gathered darkly on the forest. She had reason to be glad of her caution, for returning she came

full on the Graf, with Kunz riding beside him. She saw him point to her with his whip, and evidently ask a question as they rode on. The relief of having escaped such a danger almost made her forget the pain of leaving one who needed her so much, and who loved Hildemund so well. All the rest of the night was spent in preparations. Some things she had begged Ulfric to take for himself; others Christine Scheurlin would fetch and distribute among the needy villagers. Every moment was so full that she had hardly time to realise how suddenly and entirely her whole past life was swept away, and all the quiet work of years ended. She made her preparations with swift, unfaltering hands, allowing herself only to think of the present moment, and looking neither back nor onward. There would be time to grieve by-and-bye: there was none now. And so, by dawn, she was ready, and had roused Dornröschen, and made her eat, forcing herself to do the same, for she knew she should need all her strength.

Christine's brother came to the door to summon her, and carry her bundle, into which she had put as many of her books as she could, and she stepped out, leading Dornröschen, and left the home where she had passed all the years which made up life to her, and shed no tear, though it seemed to her

as if she left her heart itself behind her. Looking into her face, her companions read something written there which kept them silent, and not a word passed until she mounted the horse waiting for her, and took Rosilde in her arms. Then the child said mournfully, "Poor Ulfric! what will he do without us, Muhme?" and then the tears rushed suddenly into Magdalene's eyes, and for many minutes blinded her.

CHAPTER VI.

HAD Graf von Lichtenberg known of his son's orders to the bailiff of Burgstein he would have countermanaged them, not from pity for the serfs—he knew no such weakness—but from a perception that to punish them thus was to his own loss. During the greater part of the war he had remained in Italy, and when he returned, the rising in Württemberg in favour of the banished Duke gave him full occupation. But he was fully purposed to go as soon as might be to the Ilzthal, and investigate the history of the attack upon the castle. He had taken it for granted that Walther the seneschal had planned it with a view to rescuing his master's child, and he had small belief therefore in the tale,

accepted unquestioningly by Wolfgang's duller mind, that the heiress of Burgstein had been murdered or burned when the castle was set on fire. Walther would have taken good care that she should be unharmed. An accidental meeting with the prior of Marienau destroyed this hypothesis, for in casual talk over the siege of the monastery, and the losses and troubles arising out of the war, the share taken by the old seneschal in the defence, and the fact of his death were named. Walther then had been at Marienau at the very moment when Graf Lichtenberg had supposed him leading the peasants; he must have fled there immediately after his encounter with Kunz, and had never again quitted his asylum. The mystery grew darker than ever, but the Graf had no fear but that he should unravel it when on the spot, and his first step was to visit the ruins and look round with keen and close observation.

The walls yet stood, blackened and scorched, and all woodwork gone, and the way into the underground passage yawned black and open, but all this revealed nothing more than he knew already. He had Kunz and the bailiff with him, and asked a question now and then as he looked about him. Kunz related anew the events of the attack, as far as he knew them; the bailiff had seen little, for he

lived in his own house, near the village, and knowing himself hated by all the peasants on the domain as one who always had egged on the Freiherr to severity, and used his delegated authority with all the harshness he dared, he had fled for his life from the valley as soon as he saw the flames. The peasants had set his dwelling on fire before they marched away, and it was with a personal satisfaction that he had carried out Wolfgang's orders to burn the village.

Graf von Lichtenberg turned towards the chapel. No unquiet stirring of conscience troubled him as he entered it and stood where the body of the Freiherr had been laid, but Kunz looked gloomy and reluctant; since his meeting with Walther he had never got rid of an angry fear that St. Eustace might play him some ugly trick, instead of honourably considering the matter settled and expiated. He lingered outside, while the Graf passed in, looking as he usually did somewhat weary and cynical, but not at all as if any crime lay on his soul. The chapel had suffered less than any other part of the castle. Some feeling of respect for a consecrated place had hindered the peasants from purposely destroying it, and the thick walls resisted the fire which raged without. The glass had fallen from the windows, and the leadwork had melted, but

there was little or nothing to burn. Von Lichtenberg looked up and down, and his eye fell on the stone which lay above the bodies of Dietrich von Burgstein and his wife Faustina. His face changed a little, and a light suddenly flickered in his eyes for an instant. The dust which lay thickly elsewhere had been brushed away from the stone, and a wreath of wild rose, fruit and leaves, tinged by the first frost, lay upon it.

“Who put this here?” he asked.

“Indeed, my lord, I know not,” said the bailiff, surprised.

“They are scarce withered; they were placed here newly . . . Aye, 'tis just a year since the Freiherr died.”

“Methinks I did see some one—a woman and a child, I think, coming down the road from hence some two days ago,” said the bailiff, “but I was too far off to see in the dusk who they might be, and I marked them not. It is strange, in truth,” he added, wondering, as well he might, who in all the valley could cherish the memory of the Freiherr enough to thus celebrate the anniversary of his death.

“A woman and a child,” the Graf said to himself. “And roses—the roses of Burgstein.”

He felt sure now that Rosilde lived, and was

not far off; he was on her track, and riding to the Ilzthal he offered his bribe and left it to work, secure that it would take effect.

He was right. A day or two later not one, but half-a-dozen poor wretches stole up to Schloss Geyer, ready to tell him all they could. He heard each patiently, since from each story some grain of information might perhaps be sifted, and dismissed them, bidding them share the guerdon among them. Hildemund Dahn then, not Walther the seneschal, had admitted Kaspar the serf and his band into Burgstein—that fair lithe lad with whom Wolfgang had quarrelled, the son of Graf Geyer's banner-bearer. Was it out of revenge on Wolfgang that he had done this? No matter; the boy who had brought Rosilde the Dompfaff, and defended it from Wolfgang, was not likely to have let the child perish. And then von Lichtenberg thought of the wreath upon the gravestone, and of the woman and child whom the bailiff had seen, and he smiled to himself.

He was not one to lose time when he saw his way clearly, and a few hours later he stood before the Bannwart's house. Kunz and a couple of men-at-arms were not so far off but that a whistle would bring them out of the forest in a moment.

The house was closed, and there was no sign of

life about it. Hardly forty-eight hours had passed since Magdalene left it, and yet it already had a deserted, solitary look which struck him.

“How now! This Mistress Magdalene Dahn is abroad, it would seem,” he muttered. “Locked! and all still—nay, something stirs.”

He turned sharply in the direction of a sound, which came from a shed where Magdalene had left such things as she hoped might be of use to Ulfric, who could not enter her house, since his presence would have rendered it unclean and unfit for anyone else to inhabit. He had come as much to look at the house where those so dear to him had dwelt as to fetch these things, and now, emerging from the shed, came face to face with Graf Lichtenberg.

If any change came on the muffled face of the leper, none could see it, but Graf Lichtenberg stepped back with haughty repugnance.

“How, leper! what does such as thou about the dwellings of Christian men? Take thy foul presence hence. Yet stay—where is the woman who owns this house?”

“Wherefore should I tell thee that, Graf?”

“Base scum! dost dare answer me thus? Where is she, I say?”

“Beyond thy reach,” answered Ulfric, address-

ing him with no token of respect, but as equal to equal.

"How! art thou acting a part in this matter? I will have thee burned on a slow fire! I tell thee I know right well that this woman, this Magdalene Dahn, has in hiding the child Rosilde von Burgstein. Wilt thou tell me where she is?"

"I will not tell thee, lord of Lichtenberg, nor will I aid thee to add another crime to a list long enough already. What didst thou in the Eschthal a year ago? How long is it since thou gavest thy sworn brother-in-arms to the headsman, and didst play fast and loose with the Bundschuh in Würtemberg, and well-nigh deliver up thy liege lord the Duke into the hands of the Swabian League?"

"Thou knowst too much for thy life to suit my safety," said the Graf, struck and gloomy. "Who art thou, leper?"

"My name, when I had one, was thine own; I am Ulfric von Lichtenberg, thine elder brother's son," answered Ulfric, in a voice of bitterness.

"Thou! thou! Miserable wretch! I thought thee dead long since, thou disgrace to thy kindred!" exclaimed the Graf, stepping back, and more disconcerted than he would have been had a ghost from the grave risen before his eyes.

"Dead have I been these eight years—dead to

kith and kin and the world. What dost thou call this but death? Nay, ten times worse; had I died indeed, then masses had been sung for me, and some might even yet think of me and name me gently, and my grave would be among those of my kinsfolk, in holy ground."

"So thou art here! Yet alive. Curses on the day I found thee and learned thy name!" muttered von Lichtenberg.

"Dost think I wished to meet thee? Have I forgotten thy feigned pity, thy secret triumph, when the plague came upon me, and I became an outcast, and, Ebbo being dead, thou wert heir of our house? But, leper though I be, I counsel thee to work no ill to Rosilde of Burgstein, or I will make thee rue it."

"Thou! Hast yet to learn that the word or oath of a leper counts for nought?" said von Lichtenberg, struggling to recover his ordinary cold and scoffing tone. "Dost think heaven will work a miracle in thy behalf, and make thee whole that thou mayst witness against me?"

"Beware how thy injurious tongue challenges Heaven," said Ulfric; "to defend the helpless and confound such as thee I verily believe a miracle will be wrought. Seek no more for Rosilde of Burgstein, I tell thee, lest thou call destruction on thy head."

The Graf turned away with a low, deep curse, and strode into the forest. Ulfric looked after him with a harsh laugh. "So we meet again! I knew not that aught could so move this uncle of mine. Truly, to find a leper-nephew instead of the heiress of Burgstein might somewhat vex him. A miracle! —no, there are none now; but if it could be—if it could be—then would I give the life restored to me to protect the oppressed and comfort the sick. Some lives should be less sad for what I have endured."

Meanwhile, startled and dismayed as he had seldom yet been, beyond anything Ulfric guessed, the Graf was none the less bent on his purpose. "Accursed chance!" he was thinking; "I deemed him dead—his mother deceived me—she must supply his wants from her convent. What if he or she knew that, leper though he be, he can claim his revenues? Were he best out of the world? Nay, he can scarce harm me without Thomas Knades play me false, and I think he at least is dead, since I hear nought of him. Ulfric can scarce cross my path, though he knows too much. But he will not bring shame on our name; he will hold his peace for all his vaunting."

He mounted the horse which his attendants were holding, and signed to them to follow. "He knows

too much," von Lichtenberg went on thinking. "The priest knows, too, that matter of the Eschthal; he learned it through confession, doubtless—this rascal of mine believes in hell, and will have run to him for shelter—" he threw a contemptuous glance at Kunz—"but the confessional keeps its secrets—at least with a man like this Basil. But Walther the seneschal knew too, and who told *him*?"

Those concerned in Magdalene's flight kept the secret for their own sakes as well as hers. No efforts of von Lichtenberg's could detect whither she had gone, and all the valley mourned her loss and marvelled at her sudden disappearance.

To learn her history was the Graf's next step; that she was no common person he easily ascertained, and he thought he could easily learn what he desired from Graf Geyer. But to Graf Geyer the marriage of his banner-bearer was only important as a means of rewarding at small cost or pains a faithful follower, and he recollects little about the circumstances. By diligent search, however, and patient inquiry, and such clue as he had already, von Lichtenberg ascertained in Magdalene's native town to what family she belonged, and that by the mother's side she was of Paumgärtner blood. Ill-pleased as he was to find how powerful were her kindred, he felt himself on the way to attain his

ends, for neither in law nor justice could they withhold his ward, and he set close watch on Nüremberg, in order to learn immediately when the fugitives should arrive there, for thither he did not doubt they were making their way. Weeks and months, however, passed by, and no tidings reached him, for Magdalene Dahn had unconsciously defeated his calculations by turning her steps to Ulm.

CHAPTER VII.

So many were the difficulties of travel, and so great the dangers from wandering landsknechts, starving fugitives, and robber lords ready to fall on every traveller worth plundering, or any party escorting merchandise from one city to another, that over half a year elapsed before Magdalene saw Ulm, and during that time it had neither been possible to obtain any news from Hildemund, nor to learn whether her letter had reached Ulm. The last part of her journey across the belt of rainy green country which yet divided her from Ulm was made in a rough country cart, as if she had been a peasant woman journeying with her child, and perhaps a husband or brother. It was a safe manner of travelling enough, exciting no one's notice or cupidity,

and thus they went through the plain, where a veil of mist hung over the many streams and osier grounds, and Magdalene's heart beat faster as far off they could see the City of the Elms, its long line of gables, towers, and spires rising along the softly sloping banks past which the broad green Danube swept with majestic flow, proudly guarding the free Imperial city. Above all other buildings rose the tower of the Minster, yet uncompleted, but bidding fair to fulfil the ambition of the burghers, and set the statue of the Virgin, which was to crown it, so high that she should look down upon her rival sister on the summit of the Domkirche at Cologne. The twenty years which had passed since Magdalene had seen the mighty tower had hardly perceptibly advanced it, though much labour and treasure had been lavished on it; it was growing slowly, and absorbing as it were into itself the interests and lives of its citizens, now making progress when the city was prosperous, then pausing when civil tumults or outside dangers occupied all minds and exhausted men's purses, and gaining each day in grandeur and beauty as time and weather touched it with innumerable tints and shades, and harmonised all which was new with that which was old.

Magdalene had no fear but that her uncle would

give her a welcome from his heart, but she felt less secure of her reception from his daughter and son-in-law; and she knew that the child with her, who must pass for a Dahn, would find no favour in their eyes. She had her fears too how the high-spirited heiress of Burgstein would comport herself under cold or scornful treatment, and of all the many anxious moments which she had passed since leaving the Ilzthal, perhaps this was one of the worst. To go in her peasant's cart up to the doors of her kinsfolk she could not venture, especially as for anything she knew her letter had never reached them, and she directed her driver to the "Three Kings;" for low as her resources had become, she knew she must not do discredit to her kindred by alighting at any but the chief hostelry of the city, opposite the Rathhaus.

Magdalene had known Ulm well in childhood, and she recognised one familiar spot after another, as the cart jolted through the rough narrow streets, with their high-roofed houses, and their gables rising in quaint steps. Then the square before the Rathhaus was reached, where women in gold-embroidered caps were standing with pitchers at a fountain, and the sign of the "Three Kings" invited travellers to pause and enter. Rosilde, sitting by Magdalene's side, was gazing in wonder around her. In all their

wanderings they had been in no such centre of busy commercial life as this, and the number of passers-by, the waggons laden with bales which passed by, or stood at the doors of stately houses, marked out as those of merchants by the crane projecting from some hooded dormer window, the bustle and stir, almost frightened her.

“Is this Ulm?” she asked. “O Muhme! what a great lady that must be!”

She pointed to a corner house, with a wide doorway, surmounted by a carved stone arch, within which was a coat of arms. A tall and stately woman, with a train and hanging sleeves, was going up the steps, followed by a servant in green and white livery, carrying her embroidered prayer-book. Magdalene was perplexed for a moment, for the costume was rather that of a noble lady than a burgher dame, and she had yet to learn that in the twenty years which had elapsed since she had seen Ulm, the wives of the “Geschlechter” had assumed as nearly as possible the dress of the highest class, defying all edicts to restrain them, though very indignant if women of the lower burgher families attempted to do the same. The next instant, as the lady looked round for her servant, Magdalene knew who it was. “Katharina!” she murmured to herself.

The cart stopped at the inn door just as Katharina Paumgärtner disappeared within her house. Magdalene alighted and paid the driver; no one about the inn troubled himself about such humble travellers, and indeed, had they been much more imposing they would have had in great measure to look to their own comfort, for there was no eagerness to attract or please customers, or save them trouble, in any German hostelry. She entered the great kitchen, where all travellers, except of the highest distinction were entertained, and sitting down, waited until the host stopped talking to a couple of travelling scholars, who had the last news from Wittenberg to give, and passed near. Then she spoke, and humble as had been the manner of her arrival, and worn and simple as was her dress, something of calm command in her voice and air at once caught the attention of the landlord, used to see and judge a great variety of customers.

"Good host," she said, "can you send a messenger to Master Philip Welser, and tell him that there is one here who prays him to come to her?"

"Surely," he answered, his little grey eyes examining her attentively.

"Will you send no name—lady?"

Magdalene smiled as he added the title after a moment's hesitation.

"What I have said will suffice, I think, good Master Barthel."

His name had suddenly returned to her memory, though years had passed since she thought of it; all the associations connected with her visit in early girlhood to Ulm seemed awakening with strange vividness.

"How, lady, you know me? Yet I remember not your face, though I thought I never forgot a customer, and surely But I will do your errand," he said, reflecting that the easiest way of satisfying his curiosity, at no time small, was to fetch Master Welser. "Is there nothing I can set before you or your little daughter?"

Magdalene was glad to give Rosilde some occupation while awaiting the uncle whom she had not seen for so long. She sat thinking, more of the past than the present, wondering at the change which these years had made in her old playmate, Katharina, and if her husband, Hans Paumgärtner, remembered at all that once Magdalene herself had been destined for him. Had not Kilian Dahn stepped in, this would have been her fate, and her family and friends would have thought it a most honourable and suitable one, and nobody would have supposed it necessary to consult her at all. Her heart was full of the husband whom none here had known,

and whose name was so unwelcome a sound in their ears. The knowledge of this made his memory, if possible, yet dearer to her. She hardly recollects where she was, while she sat thinking, and the other guests took small heed of her. There were a party of slender, swarthy Italians, on their way to Nüremberg or Augsburg, where they hoped to find work as architects; several waggoners, laying in a hearty meal before setting forth on their journey; some country people, to whose marvelling ears a quack doctor was holding forth. They talked and laughed, and drank out of great beer cans, and paid for their meal in all sorts of small coins. As the travelling students pushed back their plates they felt about vainly in their pockets, and one said with a laugh, "Mine host, the pouch is empty —money I have none, but an you will, I will sing this worthy company a song as payment for our entertainment."

"An the song be good and well sung I accept the bargain," said the portly landlord with a laugh.

Magdalene heard what was said, and looked rather anxiously towards the door, for jests and songs at that day and in such a place were seldom fit for women's ears, but the messenger had not yet returned.

"Of that the worshipful company shall judge,"

said the student, who had paid his score not unfrequently in this fashion. "Thou, Friedl, take the bass."

And in pleasant voices enough the two young men began a song in favour just then among their brotherhood, which was received with sufficient favour to cause the host to say, "Another, my masters, another, and the score is acquitted."

They looked at one another, as if hesitating what to choose, and the bass-voiced student said, "Sing the last lay that reached us—the Marienstein."

The guests had listened with more or less careless ears to the dashing student song, which they only half understood, though the manner in which it was sung amused and attracted them, but as the first sweet and pathetic notes of the new lay came on their ears, there was a general stir of attention and pleasure, and heads nodded in time, and even the critical Italians murmured "bravo!" under their breath.

"Well sung! and a most sweet song!" said the landlord, as it ended. "Whence comes it?"

"We know," whispered Rosilde, looking with shining eyes at Magdalene, who made a sign for silence.

"That I cannot tell, good landlord. Many ask

whence come these sweet and stirring songs, but they are no more to be traced than the wind which seems to spread them abroad."

He stopped short, for the landlord turned hastily away, and the lifting of caps and rising of all the Ulmers present showed that the old man now standing in the doorway was one of the city authorities. Indeed, this was told not only by his dignified bearing, but by the four-cornered cap which marked the doctor of learning, and the fineness of the materials which composed his dress, though he wore at that moment no official costume, but the woollen doublet, the grey shoes with black buckles, the red stockings buckled below the knee breeches, and the leathern girdle and pouch, which was the usual home undress of a burgher. He bowed gravely to all present, and then advancing towards Magdalene, who had risen to meet him, "*Gott grüss' dich, dear niece,*" he said, in a voice full of kindness; "you are welcome among your kindred."

He laid one hand on the head of Rosilde, who was gazing up at him, much impressed by his height and stately air. "Good Master Barthel, I am much indebted to you, for your messenger brought me glad tidings, since this is my niece, whom these evil times have driven from her home, and who has now—praised be God!—reached us after long travel.

Dear child, we have looked for thee long; thy letter reached us four good months ago, and we have feared that some ill had befallen thee."

"Good uncle," said Magdalene, touched to the heart at realising that she was among her own kindred after years of separation and solitude, "I need not tell you how many perils delay and beset a traveller nowadays; hardly dared I hope to win through them."

"Let us home, and then thou shalt tell all the tale. Doubtless thou and the child—how call you her?—are weary."

"I am Dornröschen," Rosilde answered for herself, while Magdalene hesitated for a truthful answer.

"So! We have a guest out of a fairy tale," said Herr Welser, smiling. "But thou art awake; has the doom not yet come, or has the prince aroused thee?"

"Hildemund is the prince; he will come by-and-bye," she gravely answered.

"Ah ha! Hildemund—aye; I would thy boy had accompanied thee, fair niece. Good-day, Master Barthel: all know there is right good entertainment in the 'Three Kings,' but my niece must not first break bread under any roof but mine."

And again saluting the company with a dignified bend of the head he led the way out, leaving them to discuss the event which had just taken place. That a niece of Master Philip Welser's should have arrived was enough to set tongues wagging, but the war had caused such general distress and ruin that her humble dress and manner of journeying excited no wonder. The few words intentionally spoken by Master Welser had sufficiently explained her story. The only thing which perplexed the landlord was why she had not gone at once with her child to the corner house. He stood and watched her across the square, until she was under the doorway, before he turned back to scold his servants and attend to his customers.

“Blessed be the good God who hath brought thee back to us, niece Magdalene,” said the old man as they entered. “Twenty years since thou didst cross this threshold, when thy parents went hence to Aarburg, and never once since have mine eyes beheld thee. The maiden of fifteen has become a fair matron, yet methinks I should have known thee. Follow me, and we will seek my Katharina, once thy little playmate. My good son, her husband—thou hast not forgotten thy cousin, Hans Paumgärtner?—he is busied in the warehouse, but he will be here anon, and well pleased to find

thee arrived. Beware, beware, little maid, thou wilt else slip on these oaken stairs."

Magdalene followed in silence, with some inward doubt of how the haughty dame whom she had caught a glimpse of would receive her, and Dornröschen gazed around her, half believing that she really was in fairy land. During their journey they had halted in convents or very humble hostelleries, and nothing which she had ever seen in her life had prepared her for the magnificent luxury of a rich merchant house. At Burgstein there had been indeed a rude profusion, and the hall had a size and height which was imposing, but all the other rooms were small, and there was everywhere entire indifference to adornment and comfort, and disdain of luxury; for to the Freiherr these things represented effeminacy, while his wife observed a studied asceticism in all her surroundings. In the dwellings of the rich burghers, on the contrary, though there was not the love of art and beauty which is instinctive in Italy, there was an amount of comfort and wealth very striking to an unaccustomed eye. As in all the houses of Ulm merchants, the lower part was devoted to warehouses, but on the first floor were stately rooms, into one of which Herr Welser conducted them. It was empty, and while he called his daughter, Magda-

lene looked around and remembered it, and Rosilde gazed at the windows with painted glass in them, the seats with their richly carved backs, the beautifully carved chests and cabinets, the tables, on which were caskets of ebony and ivory, and her face grew more and more wonderstruck, until, espying a little spinning wheel, she exclaimed in a voice of relief, "Look, Muhme! there is a wheel like yours!"

The familiar object seemed to reassure her.

"Yes, my little one," said Magdalene, smiling, "and see this great book, bound in pigskin; it is the Bible wherein I used to read when I was here, and on this table"—she pointed to one made of slate, with squares marked upon it—"I learned to play chess with my good uncle."

"Will he teach me too?" asked Rosilde, beginning to recover from her first awe. Magdalene had no time to answer, for the door opened, and her cousin advanced to greet her, followed by Master Welser. Her embrace was cordial, but she took no notice of Rosilde, who surveyed her with mingled admiration and dislike.

"Welcome, cousin," she said; "we have had many masses sung for your safety. You have been long absent from us all."

She spoke with kindness, but with a touch of

condescension, which Magdalene felt more keenly than she liked to own to herself. "I have sent to tell my husband of your coming. You know, I think, that I am wedded to one of your mother's family, and that we live with my father. Here he is."

Magdalene looked with a certain amused interest at the man who came to welcome her, and whom all her family would have thought her so fortunate to marry instead of Kilian Dahn. He had forgotten all about that episode; it had only been a business affair, and others, far weightier, had long ago put it out of his mind. Magdalene could see that what was so fresh in her memory never so much as crossed his. He did not know—fortunately—how many tears she had shed once upon a time at the prospect of becoming his wife. Magdalene had been a high-minded, fastidious girl, to whom the young merchant had seemed of the earth earthy, with no higher ideal than making a fortune, and she had shrunk from him with silent, intense aversion. It seemed strange to her now that she could have spent so much strong feeling upon him. He was in middle age like hundreds of other men, and they met with cousinly friendliness, though in both him and his wife she could perceive a sort of pitying curiosity and a touch of

condescension to her, the unprosperous widow, returned after all these years. No one took any notice of Rosilde, standing by her, and gazing at these strangers. Children counted for little in the presence of their elders, and there was nothing marked in this, yet Magdalene felt, as she had never done before, that her little Dornröschen was the Edelfräulein of Burgstein, and that this neglect was not her due, and she resented it, though she felt that the fewer who knew the secret the safer for the child. She was glad when Master Welser said, "Take my cousin and the little one to her chamber, my daughter; it has been long prepared for them. I have bidden fetch her luggage from the 'Three Kings.' "

"A slender stock, in truth," said Magdalene; "for we could carry little with us."

"Well, well, Katharina will furnish all which is needed. Tarry not too long, dear niece, for I can scarce believe thou art among us again, the more welcome that thou hast brought us thy fairy maiden."

Rosilde looked suddenly up in his face with a smile, and he patted her head kindly. He was very fond of children, while his daughter professed to dislike them. When she returned alone he said musingly, "Poor Lena! Little did I or any

think what would befall her not two years after she left this house! A sad fate and a strange, yet she has become a most fair and sweet woman; there is that in her face which tells of one who dwells among noble thoughts. If her boy Hildemund be like her he should be a son to make a mother's heart glad. I am well pleased that she has that little maid with her; didst see the smile she gave me? It will be as sunshine in the old house to have a child in it; I ever think a house without children is as a cage without birds."

Katharina winced, and her tone was very cold as she answered, "I love not the brats, and I know not how any belonging to the low-born man whom a haughty noble forced upon our family should be welcome to us. Never before did Welser or Paumgärtner marry below them, and though it is no fault of Magdalene's, in her place I had never shown my face again among my kindred, least of all, have brought a Dahn with me to shame me."

"Why, daughter, what would you have her do with the orphan child whom she tells us a dying mother entrusted to her?" asked Philip Welser, reprovingly.

"Was there no convent wherein to bestow her? But that may yet be done."

"Nay, I think not that Lena will desire it. It is easy to see the child is dear to her. You who like not children cannot guess how they twine round one's heart, Käthchen."

"No, I like them not," said the childless mother, with a bitter smile.

"No word thereof to thy cousin," said Master Welser, quite unconscious of the stab he had given. "Mark that. Shame were it and scandal if Lena dwelt elsewhere than under my roof, since she wills not to seek her mother; yet such words as thou hast but now spoken would surely drive her home. She is no dependent, forget not that; the revenues of her father, which she has not touched since she left her home, and never spent to the full at any time, if slender beside those of thy husband, are ample for her needs. And there is but her boy to inherit all which her mother and thine uncles at Nüremberg have to leave, Dahn though he be."

Katharina made no answer, and he did not guess that although she, like all the rest, felt Magdalene's marriage as a great family humiliation, and resented the comments which would be made on that plebeian name of hers among the proud Ulmer families, the sharpness of her tone was chiefly caused by his own words about Dornröschen. Who should know how empty a childless house was so

well as she! The sight of women with their babies in their arms, or clinging about them, sent a sharp pang through her heart, and it was almost intolerable to hear her father rejoice in the presence of this little intruder. Too proud and reserved to own the crook in her lot, she brooded over it in silence; Rosilde would never find favour in her eyes. The more at home she became, the more she grew in favour with Master Welser, and even won the heart of his son-in-law, Hans Paumgärtner, the less Katharina could like her. Magdalene early saw this, and constantly feared that Rosilde would resent it; but Rosilde, in her childish way, was full as proud and reserved as Katharina, and ignored all slights with singular indifference. Magdalene would ask herself whether she did not perceive Katharina's hardly veiled contempt and aversion, or whether, knowing after all that she was Burgfräulein of Burgstein, she was careless of them. In fact, however, Rosilde cared very little what those to whom she was indifferent felt or thought, and to Katharina she was entirely indifferent. It could not diminish the bitterness which Katharina felt, that her husband showed in his ways to Rosilde how dear a child of his own would have been; until now he had never manifested any great liking for children, and indeed seemed absorbed both in and out of warehouse and count-

ing-house in his large business; but before Rosilde had been in the Welser home a week his voice might be heard constantly calling for her. She was privileged to seek him even in his counting-house, make seals of red wax and stamp them with his signet, and strew sand on his letters from the ivory box upon his table. With Philip Welser she was an equal favourite, and among the servants and clerks she ruled like a little queen. She had indeed certain pretty, imperious ways very difficult to resist; Magdalene herself came as near to spoiling her as conscience and the strict discipline of the time allowed—sometimes a little nearer, for Rosilde was the only one here who knew and loved Hilmund, who was ever eager to speak of him and hear all which his mother would tell her about him, nay, who identified herself so entirely with Magdalene that unconsciously the widow, who could speak of her husband to no one else here, learned to tell this unwearied listener, with her large, sympathising eyes, much about Kilian Dahn, and how she had learned to love him, and understand how good and tender and brave he was.

Katharina was kind, if somewhat cold, to Magdalene herself, but after a while they seldom met, except when meals assembled all the family; the mistress of the house was occupied with her house-

hold, her friends, and her embroidery; and Magdalene and Rosilde lived in the rooms given up to them, finding some occupations and interests for themselves, and spending a good deal of time with Master Welser, who was not only what was then called a Humanist, but an archaeologist as well. He now took little active part in city matters, unless called on to give his advice in some unusually weighty affair, but busied himself in corresponding with learned men, both in Germany and other countries. It was a time when there was a great stir in literary matters, as well as in all which concerned theology, and there was a constant correspondence carried on between learned men even in very distant places. The Welser family had been foremost in bringing manuscripts from Greece and Constantinople, and plants and animals from the New World, and Philip Welser had too a goodly collection of antiquities which were the pride of his heart; and it was with some amused contempt that he related to Magdalene how more than once he had run some danger from the Dominicans of Ulm, sworn foes of learning and investigation, by proving that some venerated relic was but the remains of heathen antiquity. He was compiling a chronicle of the history of Ulm, with loving pains and care, but his eyes were not so good at seventy as they

had once been, and he was glad to avail himself of Magdalene's willing help in transcribing his pages. She had had the excellent education not unfrequently given to women in those days, especially to those of Nuremberg, and she was able to give valuable aid to her uncle. Rosilde would sit by, with her needlework or her task, looking up now and then at the old man, with his long, wise face, and the straight soft hair, now quite grey, which hung on his neck, his still stately figure wrapped in a loose and ample gown trimmed with fur. She liked to sit near him and listened with interest, which increased as she grew older, to the talk between uncle and niece; and she took no small pride in the visits which nobles and learned men often paid to the venerable old man, who was known to them all, though he had refused a brilliant position at the Court of the third Frederic and first Maximilian, content to be a member of his own Rath, but who had travelled much and seen much, and sat at many a Reichstag.

It was a still, uneventful life, whose current of fast passing days was only stirred by occasional tidings from Hildemund, but it was without anxiety, and if Magdalene inwardly sighed for her old, free existence, and longed unspeakably for her boy, she could yet prize its security, and find good works

not a few to do in Ulm. Into these Rosilde threw herself more and more with each year that went by. She seemed so entirely contented and forgetful of Burgstein that Magdalene almost thought that, transplanted so young, she must have forgotten her real name and history, and believed herself what all around deemed her—Röschen Dahn, the niece of Magdalene's husband. But Magdalene herself could only feel that that name and history were an ever-increasing perplexity, far worse now that the child was growing into the maiden than in the first time. That Dornröschen was no longer a child Magdalene first saw in Hildemund's eyes. Twice in these years he came to visit them, filling her heart with joy, but each time made her more conscious that he was reaching manhood, and Rosilde becoming a fair maiden, still too childlike indeed to hide that these meetings were the white days of her life, but old enough to be moulded by them for all after life. Magdalene knew that the child love might at any moment kindle into flame, and she feared that no one would ever reign in Hildemund's heart but the Burgfräulein, whom he was doing his best to put out of his reach. For, if ever the great domain of her ancestors were hers, Hildemund Dahn neither could nor would profit by it. Yet Magdalene could not but be glad, what-

ever came of it, that her kinsfolk here and at Nürnberg should see what a brave, fair, loving son he had! Even his proud grandmother looked approvingly on Hildemund.

He did not come merely for his pleasure. The Duke had entrusted to him letters and messages to those whom he held to be his friends in the city, for he steadfastly kept in view his hope of regaining his duchy, although the revolving years brought little that was cheering to his cause. Now and then had come a transient gleam of success, but after each the gloom had thickened. Yet Ulrich and his few faithful friends would not despair, and now that his young son, Prince Christopher, was growing up, in honourable captivity at the Imperial Court, the princes of Bavaria, uncles to the boy, somewhat changed their tone of bitter hostility, and, if they did not desire to see Ulrich again lord of Würtemberg, they urged that it should be restored to his innocent son, their nephew, and although Archduke and Emperor were ill pleased, the House of Bavaria was too powerful to be easily silenced. These things seemed to promise a possible turn for the better in the long course of evil fortune which had followed Duke Ulrich.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE years of exile through which he had passed had changed Ulrich of Würtemberg inwardly even more than outwardly. If there were little in the saddened and serious man of middle age to recall the fair face and long bright hair which had won the boy ruler popular admiration and the name of Ulrich of the Curly Locks, there was still less which could awaken recollections of the domineering violence which had resulted in so many ill deeds and twice lost him his duchy. He had learned patience and pity for the oppressed, and the brave and constant front which he opposed to evil fortune had won even the reluctant admiration of his enemies. After the failure of the peasant rising he bided his time in Hohentwiel, and watched the deepening discontent in Würtemberg, where tax was heaped on tax, and the rule of Archduke Ferdinand began to irritate every class, from the highest to the lowest, especially the ecclesiastics. Ulrich knew by experience how dangerous priestly discontent is, and his hopes brightened as time went by. It became evident that the Archduke sought to root out Ulrich's name and race, but the

Duke knew that the growing suspicion and fear of the vast and increasing power of Austria, which was widely spread among the princes of Germany, would make even his worst enemies unwilling to see Würtemberg added to the domains of Habsburg. Rather than that even Bavaria would have lent a hand to reinstate the banished Duke on his throne. Hildemund carried back encouraging news from Ulm; the Duke's party was gaining strength there, though the city had hitherto been devoted to the interests of the Swabian League, and if Ulm could be won over to his side not only a powerful ally were gained, but a great stumbling-block removed; for the burghers were at all times haughty and stiff-necked, caring little for princes and prelates, who often had humbly to borrow from their well-filled purses, and showing small respect to the Emperor himself. Ulrich did not love them, and had small cause to do so, but he did not spurn their friendship now as he would have done in his younger, headstrong days; he knew they were trusty allies, staunch and fearless. Hildemund was sent a second time to Ulm, and brought back the good news that the burghers, highly displeased at an attempt of the Emperor's to dictate to them in the matter of Lutheranism, were disposed to furnish moneys to enable Ulrich to make a fresh attempt

on Würtemberg, and that they would secretly dispose the Swabian League to stand by and afford Ferdinand no active aid. News came from the duchy of increasing restlessness and dissatisfaction, and these were followed by the arrival of a monk, who though not an accredited ambassador, did not conceal that he was sent from the leading ecclesiastics of Würtemberg, to treat with the banished Duke. Hildemund had a glimpse of him as he arrived, and thought he had never seen so haggard a face nor such hollow, burning eyes under cowl or casque. As he turned to make the remark to Graf Eberstein, who chanced to be near, another noble came up, exclaiming, "Mary and Joseph! who is yonder shaven crown? Sure some gibing devil looks through those eyes of his!"

"Methought they were the saddest I ever saw," said Hildemund.

"Sad! I tell you there is a mocking fiend in them! Who may he be?"

"I know not, but we shall shortly hear; Max has taken him to the Duke's presence," said Eberstein.

Nothing testified more strongly to the unity of aim and purpose among the small band of Ulrich's adherents than the equality which reigned among them. All distinctions seemed effaced here; Hilde-

mund Dahn, having thrown in his lot with that of the banished Duke, to rise or fall with him, was received as readily as if he had been of noble birth by all in Hohentwiel. Though small, it was a goodly company, for there were not only some of the best and bravest of Würtemberg, but several had brought thither their wives and sons and daughters, and there was not a more gallant or polished little court in Germany than that within the walls of the old castle of Hohentwiel. Nowhere could Hildemund have been at a better school for grace and valour, and in few indeed would he have seen such reverent devotion and self-restraint. He had been received by the Duke with cordiality which won his whole heart, and held the office of his body squire,—a post readily acknowledged to be his by right, since it was known that thanks to him the Duke had escaped the snare laid for him by the Swabian League.

The monk had a private interview with Ulrich; but it was not long before all the little knot of friends who shared his fortunes were called into consultation. Ulrich had no secrets from these tried and faithful friends, almost every one of whom was an exile and landless for his sake, though they needed but to make submission to the Archduke to regain their possessions. Weal and woe were

shared with them, even the youngest, and this was partly the secret of their boundless devotion to the lord who treated them as one with himself. Hilmund took his place with the rest when they were summoned to counsel. Young as he still was, he had already, in the years spent at Hohentwiel, struck many gallant blows for the Duke; and if he sat low at the council board it was only on account of his youth, and the sons of Graf Eberstein, younger still, sat below him.

The monk looked from face to face as they took their places, scanning each, and he bent his head slightly as if in approval.

“My Lord Duke, if men count you poor they greatly err,” he said. “I know not in all Christendom any prince who can count so many gallant friends as sit before you here.”

“Rightly said,” answered Ulrich, as his eye glanced over each countenance, turned to him with an answering smile. “The best of Würtemberg is here. Think you the Duke can be so ill a man as his foes would have him, if he can win and keep such men as these? Now, good friends and brothers-in-arms all, hear what Father Arnolph has to say. It would seem that he has reason to believe that the clergy of my duchy love not the ruler whom it has pleased the Emperor and themselves to set over

them. I was rather King Stork than King Log, but there are storks and storks. It might be they would welcome King Stork the First back again, but not, as you will guess, without certain conditions. Now, good father, your tale."

It was a tale which aroused stormy discussion, to which Ulrich listened in silence, glancing now and then at the monk with a slight smile. If Father Arnolph were disappointed at the resolution manifested rather to do without the aid of the clergy than to buy it at the price of humiliating concessions, his pale and immovable countenance gave no sign of emotion.

"You hear, holy father," Ulrich said, at last. "My friends here speak as I myself had already spoken. Willing are we to yield somewhat, and ready to redress just grievances when we again rule our duchy, but not to the crippling of our rightful power. The mitre and cowl shall never dictate to Ulrich of Würtemberg. Nay, no more; you have our answer; bear it back to all whom it may concern. But now I have something more to say. It would seem, my lords and gentlemen, that our Imperial master and his brother seek to blot out my name and family, and in answer to the remonstrances of my fair brother of Bavaria, the Archduke has shown so much gracious favour as to

offer my daughter a place among the ladies who wait on his wife." Ulrich spoke with a haughty, smiling scorn, and a deep and angry murmur replied.

"To which offer the Princess Sabina replied that she would sooner take her daughter by the hand and go beg her bread," said the low voice of the monk.

"For that I thank her; she spoke well," said Ulrich, though the dark cloud came on his face which any mention of his wife always called up.

"It is scarce to tell us this that your highness keeps us here," said Max von Schweinfurt, the oldest and most free spoken of his followers.

"No," laughed Ulrich, "I had scarce dared to call thee from the wine cup for so small a cause, old toper, least of all when Hildemund here was singing; for next to wine, song is dear to thee. Well, thou shalt have thy wine and thy song again speedily, but there are tidings which call for all our wit if ever we are to see my young son Christopher again without a shaven crown. What say you all to that?"

"How, my lord!" exclaimed several voices. "Prince Christopher would enter the cloister?"

"'Tis no case of would, my friends—who asks that of him? The Emperor likes ill the stir that

Bavaria hath made touching the poor lad's rights, and it has entered the Imperial mind that it were well to have him beyond the Alps, into a Spanish cloister, so I learn."

He waited for an answer from the amazed and indignant knights.

"Out on the traitorous plot!" they muttered.
"My lord, the thing must not be."

"No, it must not be," said Ulrich, lifting his head, while his voice deepened with profound indignation. "Is it nothing that they have wrought such foul ill against the father as never yet did prince brook, but they would end my line in a cloister? Bury the hope of Würtemberg in a monk's cowl! Out upon it! The boy must sure be a princely lad and a noble, else they had not feared him. Know you that 'twas only this very year he learned aught of me, his father, or so much as knew whether I were living or dead! so close was all kept from him. But best so! At least he has not heard the slanders that mine enemies spread against me!"

The Duke spoke with indescribable bitterness.

"Had he not been heard to say he would lose body and life rather than give up Würtemberg he had not come to this pass," said the monk.

"It was well said!" exclaimed Graf Eberstein.
"Have you seen him, father?"

"I have," answered the monk, briefly.

"What like is he? Did you have speech of him?"

"I had, else would he know nothing even now of his noble father."

"So!" said Ulrich, much surprised. "And wherefore risked you so much? How came you to speech of him?"

"I was sent on business of our abbey to Vienna, and the clergy of Würtemberg, as I have already said, have small cause to uphold the Archduke," answered the monk, in the same low, passionless tone; and Ulrich laughed.

"I understand thee now. And a monk can ever find a moment for secret words."

Father Arnolph made no reply to the taunt; no change ever seemed to come on the pallid and wasted countenance, in which the dark and vivid eyes alone seemed living, but to the repeated inquiry from the knights as to what the young Prince was like, he answered, "Tall and fair, much like yonder young squire," looking at Hildemund; "but he has long hair and curly, such as my lord here had at his age. The Emperor jests thereat, and says among his familiars that he will have it cut

so short that his best friends shall not know him again."

"How heard you that, monk?" asked Max von Schweinfurt, bluntly.

Father Arnolph did not appear to hear, and Ulrich said, with a bitter smile, "Dost need to ask? Do not the priests hear all that men say? nay, all they think? Now, how to save the boy, and hinder that the long locks fall not under the cloister scissors?"

There was a silence of deep perplexity.

"The Prince's escort will go by way of Tyrol. Belike they will spend a night at St. Willibald, a cloister of our order," said the monk, suggestively.

"Will the brotherhood aid him to escape?" asked Ulrich, eagerly. "No, they will not compromise themselves."

"Assuredly not, but if any plan were devised, and one harboured there who was friendly to him, he might get speech of the Prince."

"True," said Ulrich, looking round on the faces eagerly turned to him. "But whom to send? Nay, Max, your blunt tongue would tell all, and you, Eberstein, and Regensburg, and every knight here, every one of you has looked my enemies too often in the face not to be recognised at once!"

"Who is in command of the party?" asked Eberstein.

"Graf Redwitz," the monk answered.

"Ha! He has a keen eye; he would know me at once. Yet surely I can aid in this matter, for though my lands be in Würtemberg, where Archduke Ferdinand is graciously pleased to care for them in my stead, I was brought up as a child in Tyrol, and my foster brother and all his kin would risk their lives did I but hold up my finger to them. If the Prince could but win to their mountain home he should be so hidden that none but the eagles should know where he abode."

"My lord," began Hildemund, eagerly, but blushed and stammered, abashed at having ventured to speak where almost all were older than he.

"Well," said Ulrich, smiling encouragement, "say on. Wouldst save the son as once thou didst the father?"

The monk looked keenly for an instant at Hildemund.

"If it might be, my lord."

"Well, thou art ever ready-witted. What is thy device? Wilt read him, too, a fable?"

"My lord, if I went as a gleeman perchance I might gain access to the Prince in the convent

whereof this reverend father spoke, and make known to him some means of escape."

"Gleemen, and such as they, would scarce receive hospitality within such walls," observed Eberstein.

Ulrich looked at the monk, who answered the silent question with, "If a gleeman chanced to come at the time when the Prince was harboured at St. Willibald, he would scarce be turned away. It is a Christian duty to shelter the poor and needy."

There was a faint, unmistakable irony in his voice. Graf Eberstein glanced at him, and said aside to his next neighbour, "Who is this monk?"

"I know not, any more than you, but sure a mocking devil dwells under his cowl! Whoever he be, he is one of whose wit and craft the convent thinks highly, else he were not here," answered the noble addressed.

"Even if thou hadst speech of him, the brotherhood would scarce let him escape out of their walls, lest blame fall on them," said Ulrich, looking at the monk, who bent his head assentingly.

"If the party spend the night at St. Willibald they will make a midday halt at Grünau," said Graf Eberstein; "and could the Prince once escape thence he should soon be where even the long arm of Charles V. should not reach him."

"The heir of Würtemberg must not be buried in a cloister," said Max von Schweinfurt; "but, mark you, monk, neither must he usurp his father's seat. We will not have it."

"It is Ulrich, not Christopher, that we need," said Father Arnolph.

"Did you think so when you came here, holy father?" asked Ulrich, with a smile.

"I think so now," he answered unmoved.

"Who will form the escort?" asked one of the knights.

"Von Redwitz and Hohenberg and one or two others are named, and young Regensburg and Wolfgang von Lichtenberg, doubtless, for, except Redwitz, no one knows the aim of the journey, and the Emperor would have it seem as if the Prince and one or two young companions went out to see another part of his dominions."

"Who is this Wolfgang von Lichtenberg?" asked Max von Schweinfurt.

"The son of the lynx," answered Ulrich; "hast forgotten? But I knew not that this Graf had risen to such favour with Austria that his wolf-cub should be thus honoured."

"He knows how to climb," answered Father Arnolph, briefly.

"It would seem so. Is the son like the father?"

"Nay, indeed. Rather will he one day overthrow all his father's schemes, for he is sullen and dogged, but honest and dull. You know him, Junker?" said Father Arnolph suddenly to Hildemund.

"I have seen him formerly," said Hildemund, surprised. "How guessed you that, father?"

"If you would keep your thoughts to yourself you must learn to rule your looks, young sir."

"I will try. Did you say I was like the Prince?"
"Somewhat, seen from afar."

"Then he shall steal away as the gleeman. The chance will be found or made," said Hildemund, with a gay certainty which raised the spirits of his hearers; but the Duke laid his hand on his shoulder, and said in a lowered tone, "Be not hasty to pledge thyself, dear youth; thou canst play the part, for though thou hast lost the sweet boy's pipe which caught mine ear at Sanct Anna, thou hast but changed the lark's voice for that of the thrush. But bethink thee, this matter may touch liberty, if not life."

"My lord, let that go. I have little to fear, but if it should go ill with me, I would ask your highness to send a gracious message to my mother, and when Würtemberg is yours again, to do right to one you know of."

"By my word as duke and knight I will," answered Ulrich, "but I have not so many friends that I can afford to lose any;" and then, as if desirous to shake off anxious thoughts, he turned to the monk and said, "We will speak again of these matters; but now 'tis late, and our ladies wait—and our meat also."

"It does, my lord," said Max von Schweinfurt.

"Aye, I can see thou art hard set, man!" laughed the Duke. "I have noted well enough thy rueful countenance this hour past, but thy stomach can better wait than such business as this of ours. Come, my lords."

They passed into the hall, and several ladies entered by another door, and all discussion of serious matters was put aside while the servants carried the meat round and filled the cups with wine. The chase was talked of, and arms, and politics, though nothing touching Würtemberg was said, and the new way to India was spoken of, and the increasing audacity of the Turks, and the death of the Elector of Saxony. Ulrich seemed unwilling to leave the board, and lingered after the meal was done, joining in the general conversation, and often addressing Father Arnolph with the frank and winning graciousness which none knew better how to show, and which had a peculiar charm in one so

manly and stately as Ulrich. The monk made little response, but watched keenly all that passed, as one who had to bear back a full report to those who sent him. Ulrich was well aware how closely he was being studied, but he showed by no word or look that he knew it, although deeply conscious of how much would depend on the impression made upon this ecclesiastical ambassador.

“My lord, is the afternoon to pass without song?” asked one of the ladies present, as a pause and lull in the flow of talk occurred.

“Not so! This holy father, to whom I would fain show such poor honour as lies in our power shall judge how our Hildemund here is fitted to play the part he would assume,” said Ulrich. “Thy zither, my squire. Who would think what rare sounds a cunning hand can draw out of so rude an instrument? I love our zither; only a true German hand can deal with it.”

Hildemund sought his zither, and the Duke continued, to Father Arnolph, “I know not how we should have passed many a stormy evening and weary day within these walls, but for my young squire’s music. Now, give us of thy best, dear lad; yet how to choose where all are best?”

“Let us have the hunter’s lay, and we will join

in the chorus," said the son of Graf Eberstein, and Ulrich nodded assent.

"Have these songs reached your ears, father, or do they not pierce through cloister walls?" said the Duke, as the ringing notes died away.

"Go where one will, they are known and sung, my lord."

"Aye, these many years past, yet no one, save indeed this squire of mine, has any guess who their maker is, and Hildemund will tell nought; no, not to pleasure his liege lord."

Hildemund shook his head, smiling, and laid a finger on his lips.

"Well, one more lay. Give us that one, so strangely sad and sweet, that it might make a man's eyes wet, and he need feel no shame—'The swallows flit round the Marienstein.'"

"Yes, yes, there is none sweeter," cried several voices.

Hildemund chanced to look at the monk as Ulrich spoke, and saw him start violently; his pale face flushed, and his eyes glowed as he turned them on the singer, so that they almost seemed to scorch like live coals. It was as if he had suddenly seized a long sought clue.

"Why, wherefore delay thus? What is amiss?"

asked the Duke, surprised by Hildemund's sudden pause and change of countenance; "art weary?"

"No, my lord," answered Hildemund, collecting himself, but not with much success.

"Thou hast not done thyself or the song justice," observed Ulrich, as the tender, wistful air came to an end. "Thou art tired; I knew not how late it was. We must hold council again what order to take. . . . Max, I have need of thee. Good-night, my lords and ladies. Father, my good lord of Eberstein will guide you to your chamber."

"Nay, my lord, if this young squire will be my guide it suffices," said the monk, and Ulrich noted something forced and strange in his voice, though the emotion which his face had betrayed was but momentary.

"Be it so. Hildemund, see that our worthy guest be duly cared for. Come, my Max."

The Duke left the hall leaning on the shoulder of his oldest and trustiest follower, who said with his usual gruff freedom:

"Can we trust yon shaven crown, my lord?"

"Aye; it is for his interest to play us fair. Max, my good star must have moved Ferdinand of Austria to meddle with the privileges of the clergy in my duchy! The tide has turned at last."

He spoke with proud confident triumph, as one who felt himself again master.

“I think so too, my lord.”

“I know it, good friend, and here is the proof. The lynx of whom we wot, who has climbed from height to height until his son is among the favoured at the Emperor’s court, yet sees it well after plotting and planning my ruin all these years, to whisper in all secrecy the scheme concerning my son unto the monks, that it may be borne unto mine ear. What think you of that? He must tremble sore for his Würtemberger lands, methinks. Now, if I fail once more, he has Court favour, and if I regain my duchy, he has laid me under a debt unto him. Is it not well devised? Aye, truly, the tide has turned, and I am as glad for the sakes of my true and faithful followers as mine own. We have gone through many a storm of ill-fortune shoulder to shoulder, Max! But I would I could see my way as to the boy Christopher. Saved he must be, yet I like ill to risk Hildemund Dahn, who is well-nigh as dear as a son to me. All these years he has cheered my sad hours, and believed in better times, and asked nothing but to be near me, and for guerdon I risk his life.”

“In a good cause, my lord, and what could any ask more?”

"If he do this thing and return with my son, I will knight him before I embrace my own boy," said Ulrich, with something of his old impetuosity. "Eberstein doubtless will accompany him and move the peasants of Grünau to aid in the having away of Christopher."

"Will they do it, my lord?—the Tyrolese are ever loyal to Austria," said Max.

"Here is Eberstein himself—answer that, you who know the people, *Graf*," said Ulrich.

"Loyal they are, but I can answer for some that they love me better than Charles," replied Eberstein. "One way or another I can compass the flight if only the Prince be warned and willing, and therein Hildemund must play his part."

"Think you he will get the chance at St. Willibald?"

"The monk will see to that," said Ulrich; and so well known was the rapid communication and unanimous action among convents of the same order, so intangible and vast the power that the ecclesiastical body thus wielded, that there was no doubt that, if they chose to forward an interview between Hildemund and the Prince, means would certainly be found, without a shadow of suspicion falling on anyone concerned.

Hildemund had accompanied Father Arnolph,

who put aside all offers of service with a hasty sternness which disconcerted him, though the look which he had surprised had prepared him for something strange.

“Young man, answer me as your soul is dear to you,” he said, grasping Hildemund’s arm, and looking into his face. “Whence had you that lay of the Marienstein?”

“From him who made it.”

“I knew it. He lives then yet,” said Father Arnolph, catching his breath, while a look which might have been exceeding joy or exceeding pain, or both together, flashed across his countenance. You need not tell me his name—he made and sang it himself as a boy dwelling at Marienstein—he is Ulfric von Lichtenberg.”

“Ulfric . . . von Lichtenberg! Is that his name? How do you know this, father? Do you know too that he is——”

“A leper! Aye, indeed, I know it right well,” said the monk with a laugh so strange that Hildemund drew back, believing he had to do with one insane, though he knew the next instant that this could hardly be. “Where is this leper?”

“I may not tell you. How can I tell that Ulfric would have me name his hiding-place?”

“His hiding-place! Aye, he has indeed hidden

himself but too well, since never could I learn aught of him."

"He has ever shrunk from the eye of man, and could more easily starve than accept a dole. I guessed him a clerk, and perhaps noble, but—a Lichtenberg!"

Hildemund could not master his astonishment and wonder. "Lichtenberg!" he repeated.

"Even so, the nephew of Graf Ruprecht, who holds his lands and revenues. The elder nephew fell in battle—in an evil day for the younger, who else perchance had not been now—a leper."

"I understand you not, father."

"I know that, young sir," answered the monk, in the same scoffing and enigmatical tone. "It would seem you did not disdain this wretched outcast?"

"Outcast and leper though he be, never did a gentler or nobler spirit dwell in any breast."

"Therein you speak truly. Would you have thought that any could be found who for gold would hurl him from a fair and honoured life into such a gulf of misery as a man would scarce wish to his mortal foe? Would you have thought so, I ask you?"

"I know of one who would if he gained thereby."

"So! You guess the tale?" said the monk astonished.

"Nay, I only know that Graf Lichtenberg would rejoice at aught which gave him wealth and power —aye, were it spear or poison."

"Graf Lichtenberg! I deemed you meant another—aye, he is ever ready to move ill deeds, and make others his instruments. The evil one himself is scarcely a more subtle tempter. But this concerns you not. Tell me, I say again, where to find Ulfric. Evil was the day for him and me that we met; long years have I spent since in prayer and penance, and found no rest, no, nor ever shall until Ulfric has heard and pardoned all. Pardoned! If indeed he can, then I shall believe that Heaven has mercy even for me."

He spoke with a passion the more intense for being suppressed.

"I cannot tell you—I may not, without the leave of Ulfric. Nay, hear me. Herr Basil, Pfarrer of Ilzthal, will know if it be well you have speech of him. Ask me no more, it touches my honour to betray Ulfric's secret."

"Young fool! you know not what you do in thus hindering me," said the monk gloomily. "Not for me only, though it be no light thing to hinder a sinner from cleansing his soul, but Ulfric—Ulfric,

mark you—would pay for the tale I have to tell with his heart's blood."

Hildemund stood in great perplexity. "If I live to return from the errand on which I am bound I will seek him and tell him what you have said, unless indeed you will seek Herr Basil without delay."

"I may not go to Ilzthal nor anywhere without consent of my superior," said Father Arnolph, the fire dying out of his eyes, and a deep despondency spreading itself over his countenance, as he suddenly recollected he was not a free agent. "I had forgotten—all seemed gone from me but that dark past. I know not if I shall gain permission or not."

"How! when it is to confess a sin and ease a burdened soul?"

"Oh, young sir! do you think we religious count such matters so weighty? I counsel you not to see the cloister as closely as I have done. I entered it to atone for a great sin and work out my salvation; and it was soon found I had a keen wit and knew men, and could serve the Church, and I have done so, but as for my soul . . . Go to Ilzthal! A private errand to right a wrong black as hell, to ask pardon of one foully wronged, is of small matter; were it to forward the interests of our order, or our monastery, it would be done right speedily."

There was a pause. "To come so near and be baffled!" he muttered; then aloud—"What like is that Pfarrer of whom you spoke?"

The tones were touched with the ingrained contempt of the monk for the secular priest.

"The best man I ever knew," answered Hildemund, warmly.

"Ah!" The intonation of disdain was unmistakable, and Hildemund resented it. "Yes, the purest and the best—a man who could not harbour a foul or mean thought, and who, if he erred, would err out of goodness rather than any fault."

"And so would do the more harm," said Father Arnolph.

"Never saw I one like him, except indeed my mother," said Hildemund, eye and voice softening as he spoke that beloved name. "When he speaks of our dear Lord and the world unseen it is as if he were a traveller who told of a country seen with his own eyes, and the king of which he knew well, and one must needs believe all he says because he knows the truth thereof so well."

"Ah!" said the monk again, but in another tone.

"I would I could see him again!" Hildemund continued, stirred by the thoughts of his old home

and those there. "And I shall when I do your errand."

"Aye—when!" said the monk.

It did not strike Hildemund that he doubted whether he would ever return from his perilous undertaking. "Only tell me what to say," he added.

"If thou dost do mine errand, say that he who in the world was Thomas Knades the leech. . . . No, I must tell the tale myself. If I can but incline the Duke to grant what we ask . . . Surely he must see how his own hopes rest on the support of the clergy!"

"The Duke will not yield more than he sees good either for threat or promise," said Hildemund. "He knows when to give way and when to stand fast."

"Aye, he has learned that lesson. I saw it while we talked together, and I laid before him the offers and demands wherewith I am charged. The hasty youth who twice threw away his throne has grown into a noble man. It is the father whom Würtemberg needs, not the son. I say it not to flatter Ulrich's ear, as you deem," he added, with a low scoffing laugh. "As I noted a while ago, you have not learned the first art of courts, or your looks would not so readily betray you. What! a blush! never saw I courtiers blush before! Fie! 'tis a girl's trick!"

"I am no courtier," said Hildemund, angry at feeling his colour rise more and more at the gibing tone, and wondering whether this could be the same man who had but now stood before him in an agony of remorse.

"Therein you are right, for a courtier must know how to stoop and flatter, and lie smoothly, and take rebuff and gibe sweetly, and make fair show of devotion to his lord, while all the while he schemes for his own advantage."

"We know nought of such arts in Hohentwiel. We would not be scorned by Ulrich or by ourselves," said Hildemund.

"And what does this banished Duke offer thus strongly to bind men to a losing cause?"

"He counts us as friends," said the young man, a light kindling in his frank eyes. "For those who know Duke Ulrich, this is meed enough."

"Yet many paint him blacker than the foul fiend," said the monk. "Know you that? Is there no truth in certain tales, thou loyal squire?"

"I need not seek to hide what you must know right well; there are dark things in the Duke's past; let those who have none to repent cast stones at him," said Hildemund, and saw, not without satisfaction, that the thrust made Father Arnolph wince and frown; "but he has nobly redeemed them;

where would you now find a more gallant and goodly prince in all Germany? It seems to me that one who has greatly fallen, yet had the strength to rise and go forward, though clogged by his deed, and knowing that for all his sorrow he can never undo it, is nobler than he who being little tempted hath never fallen."

"Deem you so?" said the monk, with startled eagerness; but the next instant he added, in the scoffing tone which had already angered Hildemund, "You should be a clerk, fair sir; such a ready tongue and fair face would surely lead to high preferment and favour. What! you mislike my harmless jest? Now who would have thought you so hot? Well, I want but to be left in peace. Fair dreams to you; get to your pillow, and I will to prayer."

Hildemund went away angry and astounded. He could hardly yet grasp the fact that the leper of the Eschthal was Graf Lichtenberg's nephew, Rosilde's cousin. Dornröschen! The leper's blood flowed in her veins too; one day that fatal taint might show itself in her as well as him. He knew not whence the thought came, and recoiled from it as if it were sacrilege, but it returned and filled him with a passion of tenderness and fear. He felt as if he must seek her, and take her in his

arms and protect her from this and all else which could threaten her. The thought of her in her sweet maidenhood, no longer a child, yet meeting him with the fearless, childish affection which had deepened with each year possessed him. He knew then what he had never consciously realised before, that come what might, Dornröschen was dearer to him than all the world besides—nay, that if he saw her, like Ulfric von Lichtenberg, an outcast, abhorred by all others, she would be not less, but if this were possible, more dear to him.

CHAPTER IX.

MANY plans had been discussed and rejected at Hohentwiel before Hildemund took his way to Tyrol, accompanied by Graf Eberstein, who undertook to furnish means of escape, were Prince Christopher once out of the hands of his guard, if but for half an hour. He could count on ready and unquestioning aid from the family who had looked on him through his early childhood as brother and son, and with whom, during later years, when on visits to his kindred in Tyrol, he had kept up affectionate intercourse; but the difficulty remained how to convey to the young Prince a warning of his

danger, and intelligence that friends were at hand. This must be Hildemund's task. Hildemund could only trust to some happy chance, but he was one of those to whom such chances are apt to offer themselves, and his hopefulness sustained that of his much older and less sanguine companion. They turned their backs on the sparkling Zeller lake, and distant Bregenz, and made their way as rapidly as they could to the Italian borders so as to precede the Prince and his party, of whose movements Father Arnolph had seemed accurately informed. Graf Eberstein avoided the beaten track and all places where he was likely to meet with any of his friends or kindred, and conducted Hildemund to the house of his foster parents, hale old folks, who received him with rejoicing, and treated him as an equal, with a hearty frank affection which amused and delighted Hildemund, accustomed as he was to view him as one of the gravest and most high-born of the nobles at Hohentwiel. Eberstein himself seemed another man in this mountain home; he looked ten years younger, Hildemund thought, and jested and laughed with his old foster parents and their sons and daughters as if he had no cares or anxieties weighing him down. Hildemund was cordially received as his companion, and the motive of their coming was discussed without reserve. To these

Tyrolese, devout, but passionate lovers of freedom, the plot to entrap the young Prince into a cloister appeared monstrous; to a man they were all ready to defeat it. From them Hildemund learned that the annual fair at Grünau would take place on the day on which it was probable the troop would pass through the little town, and though this made it difficult for a fugitive to steal away unnoticed, on the other hand the bustle and stir and the number of strangers flocking to the valley might favour escape. All travellers from St. Willibald were sure to make Grünau their halting-place before undertaking the next long and difficult stage, and there, if anywhere, the attempt must be made.

“The monk’s garb would cover the knight’s, so that none could guess at what it conceals,” said Seppi, the youngest of the brothers, who had thrown himself heart and soul into the discussion.

“Twere not hard to cast it round him unseen in some dark corner of the church,” suggested another, “and then he might pass forth unmarked by any, and in half an hour we would have him out of reach of all his foes.”

“Said I not so?” said Eberstein, turning to Hildemund.

“That half-hour must be gained,” said Hildemund resolutely, and he put on the gleeman’s dress,

which hitherto he had not needed to assume, and with his zither took his way towards St. Willibald, guided by Seppi, until the abbey came in sight, standing amid its meadows and orchards, under the great mountains clothed with pine woods, above which the snowy peaks raised their noble heads. Like Sanct Anna, this was one of those abbeys where the monks were more grandly lodged than many a prince. It had manifold outside interests; its inhabitants were busy men of the world, mixing in politics, and trading with the numerous merchants who came to buy the produce of their fields and flocks. Its prelate had his banqueting and audience halls like a prince, and kept all but regal state. Many a large subsidy had Charles V. had from St. Willibald, and many of his soldiers were serfs from the abbey lands, but his demands had become more and more peremptory as they grew heavier, and the prelate had taken counsel with his chapter and with other convents of his order how a check might be found for the ever-growing power of Habsburg. That Archduke Ferdinand was following in his brother's steps, and levying heavy toll on the convents of Wurtemberg, strengthened the resolve of the order that Austria should annex no more states to her dominions.

Hildemund lingered until he saw the little troop

approaching the abbey gates; and let them overtake and pass him, as he sat by the wayside, touching his zither, beside a fountain where a clear streamlet poured into a stone basin from a wooden spout, above which stood a carved figure of St. Willibald. The leader of the party was a noble, past middle age, with grizzled hair and beard, doubtless Graf Redwitz, and beside him rode a youth whose fair locks and gallant bearing marked him out as Duke Ulrich's son. Hildemund's heart beat quickly at the sight of him. He was conversing gaily with Graf Redwitz, and glancing round as if all the novel sights and sounds were full of enjoyment to him; for the first time he had the sense of freedom, and no longer felt himself within a gilded cage. There was something deeply pathetic in his joyous unconsciousness of the secret aim in this journey. He noted Hildemund, and smiled, throwing him a silver piece, as he held up his zither and looked supplicatingly at him. Some half-dozen gentlemen followed, among whom Hildemund instantly recognised Wolfgang von Lichtenberg, not only by the black and white plume and scarf which were the colours of his house, but by the round dark eyes under straight thick brows, and the sullen and dogged expression of countenance. Except that years had changed the boy into a man, Wolfgang

was little altered. Hildemund hoped that he himself was less easily identified. He had said nothing to anyone of the special danger which he knew would threaten him when he heard that Wolfgang would be of the party, but he was well aware of it. Wolfgang would not forget a grudge, and if he recognised Hildemund he would assuredly find means to gratify it. Hildemund saw his eyes turn upon him, but there was no recognition in their haughty gaze. He had not his father's unerring eyes for a face once beheld. Graf Lichtenberg would have seen through Hildemund's disguise in an instant, but the slow mind of Wolfgang had not realised that the years which had made himself into a man had done as much for his boy enemy, whom he still thought of as the slim lad who withstood him in the castle hall of Burgstein. Attendants followed with pack-horses, and a number of men-at-arms completed the troop. They rode slowly, as if their horses were tired, and Hildemund reached the abbey gates almost as soon as they, well pleased both at having attracted the Prince's attention, and at having encountered the gaze of Wolfgang without rousing suspicion. Other wayfarers were asking admission, for the approaching fair at Grünau brought a great concourse of strangers to the valley, but Hildemund almost doubted, in spite of Father

Arnolph's assurance, whether one of the humble and despised caste of gleemen would be admitted into those stately precincts, but to his request for a night's lodging the porter answered, "Though indeed we seldom house thy craft, yet our lord abbot has bidden to-day and to-morrow admit all who crave hospitality, so they will promise to pray for the soul of our reverend sub-prior, now at point of death. Enter then, and pray to Our Lady and St. Willibald for his peace. Yonder, on the right, is the hospitium."

Hildemund entered accordingly. He could not but connect this order as much with what Father Arnolph had said as with the condition of the sub-prior, and he felt sure that some opportunity would offer unsuspected for his communication to Prince Christopher. Many guests were in the hospitium, though none of any high degree; these were housed elsewhere, but presently the attendants of Graf Redwitz's party appeared, and he listened closely to all they said, though putting himself as little forward as possible. He learned but one thing of importance; namely, that, as he had hoped, they would halt at Grünau for a couple of hours before pursuing their way over the Brenner pass. The next morning then would be the critical time.

As in duty bound, all in the hospitium attended

vespers, and so did the young Prince and his party, to whom the abbot afterwards showed the treasures in the sacristy, the gold and silver vessels, the costly vestments, the great illuminated missals, and then pointed out all which was noteworthy in the church itself. Hildemund durst not venture into the sacristy, but he lingered before the altar of St. Willibald, in hopes of a word unnoticed with the Prince, and observed with what quick interest he listened and questioned, and how gay and untroubled his air was. Not a shadow of suspicion could have crossed his mind. Graf Redwitz attended him, and showed all due readiness to admire and reverence, but was never out of earshot for a moment. Hildemund wondered whether he now mistrusted the abbot, or was always equally vigilant. In either case it augured ill. As they approached the chapel where Hildemund knelt, he rose and stood respectfully aside, and the abbot stopped, without even appearing to perceive his presence, and began pointing out the story of the patron saint of the monastery, told in the richly coloured panes overhead, and Hildemund reverently drew a little nearer and listened too. The young Prince smiled and said, "Sure, 'tis the gleeman I saw near your gates by the roadside, reverend father. I had not deemed his craft so devout."

"All who receive our hospitality to-day are bound to pray for Father Friedmund, our sub-prior, who lies at the point of death, as I have already told your highness," said the abbot. "It may be you would choose to hear him sing this evening? If so he will be much honoured."

Hildemund turned a bright and eager look towards the Prince, who, attracted by the frank and pleasant countenance of the young man so little his senior, answered smiling, "Right willingly, my lord abbot. Perchance it will be long ere I again hear a German lay. What say you, my lord of Redwitz? Were it not a pleasant way to spend an hour ere we go to our beds?"

"Surely, if it please your highness," answered the Graf, who was desirous to show all deference to his charge until he had him safely within convent walls. "Music is ever dear to your ear."

"Methinks a gleeman must lead a merry life, and be welcome wherever he turns his steps," said Christopher. "Is it not so, young minstrel?"

"Yes, my lord, I have had many kind words from peasants and princes, in taverns or court, and many a token of goodwill," said Hildemund, bringing the gold chain round his neck into view; "here is one I am right proud of."

It was the chain which Ulrich had given him at

Sanct Anna. The abbot took the opportunity of the Prince's attention being occupied, to ask some confidential question of von Redwitz; he spoke so low that the Graf had to bend forward and listen attentively to hear it.

Christopher stooped down to see the chain closer, and Hildemund rapidly turned the golden medal which hung from it, and showed on the reverse side the three antlers which were the arms of Würtemberg. The blood flushed crimson in the cheeks of the young Prince; he looked a keen, sudden question, which Hildemund answered by a glance of warning, while he said aloud, "If it please your highness to send for me by-and-by I will sing my best, though I am but a poor zither-player, and no Meistersänger, like them of Nuremberg, whom all tongues praise so greatly."

The Prince nodded, and turned to the abbot with a question about the relics contained in the church, and Hildemund saw that he had been understood. The self-control and readiness shown by Christopher gave him good hope for the future. He went gaily back to the hospitium, and exchanged a friendly sign with the eager faces crowded at the windows of the convent school to watch the guests who flocked to the abbey on this stirring day, an annual holiday, in honour of a visit paid to the abbey by

Maximilian, the grandfather of Charles V., who granted the scholars a certain number of fishes and an extra holiday annually. They could not hope as much from the coming of Christopher of Würtemberg, but his arrival was an event in their monotonous life, and all the tonsured lads, destined for the priesthood from earliest years, or wilful scholars, who were to return by-and-by to the world, were watching for a glimpse of him.

The banquet offered by Abbot Florian to his guests lasted long, and did not seem saddened by the illness of the sub-prior. Its luxury was tempered by strict decorum; this abbey knew nothing of the light and scandalous life too common in many, and the reader appeared, and gave all present an opportunity of being edified during good part of the meal. Only a limited number of the community were present; some were absent on business connected with the convent, others were serving the parishes dependent upon it. The stately order which was observed made more of the suite than Wolfgang find the time pass very slowly, though rich dishes and noble wine abounded, and when at length the Latin grace had concluded the meal, they awaited drearily enough the prospect of several more long hours spent in this reverend company. Something had been heard among them of the glee-

man, and the hope of some variety in the grave tranquillity of the evening was highly welcome. More than one of the younger knights privately besought Prince Christopher to demand his presence. He signed assent readily, for though, to one early ripened by misfortune and a life which was but a veiled captivity, the conversation between the two men, the one a keen statesman, like Graf Redwitz, and the other a deeply-read and cultivated priest like the prelate of St. Willibald, was full of interest, he had his reasons for seeing the gleeman again, and his mind was full of the question how to speak unnoticed with him. He could not doubt that this minstrel had come here expressly to meet him, sent either by that strange monk who had revealed so much to him a few months before, or perhaps by the father whose name no one ever spoke, and whom he had not seen since early childhood. In spite of himself there was a preoccupied look on his countenance, though he had not been bred up at the Austrian court without acquiring that art of concealing his thoughts in which Father Arnolph had found Hildemund deficient. The abbot remarked it, and observed to Graf Redwitz in a lowered voice, "My lord, our princely guest wearies of our grave talk, which indeed is not of his age. I would not that he thought of his sojourn among

us as a tedious time. How were it if we conducted him over our library and schools? Yet there is much that I would say to you were these young ears but occupied. Think you indeed that the Holy Father——”

“We are overheard, my lord,” said Graf Redwitz hastily, and there was a moment’s pause, amid which the distant notes of a zither were audible, and a voice singing.

“Tis the gleeman in the hospitium,” said the abbot; “I marvel that Father Gabriel should permit it.”

“Nay, now I think of it, did not the Prince desire to hear him?” said Graf Redwitz, who was as desirous to continue the conversation as Abbot Florian could be. “His voice and instrument might while away an hour pleasantly enough, if it pleased you to allow his presence.”

The abbot hesitated a moment, then gave permission, and Hildemund was summoned, amid the unconcealed satisfaction of all the younger party. Abbot Florian was quite sincere in saying he wished for a private conversation with Graf Redwitz, who could boast of being deeper in the Emperor’s confidence than any one else, and was well able to judge what the policy of Charles V. was likely to be towards the Holy See. On the other hand, von

Redwitz was anxious to ascertain what support the great Benedictine houses in Austria were likely to lend the Emperor in the vexed question of the relations between the house of Habsburg and Rome. The conversation continued in a key inaudible to any but the two immediately concerned, while Hildemund, bowing low, awaited the Prince's commands. His early wanderings about Thuringia had brought him in contact many a time with such vagrant minstrels as those whose part he had assumed, and he answered the careless questions of the young nobles with readiness. No suspicion was aroused, though Wolfgang stared hard at him with a heavy, perplexed air, as if some recollection were stirring in his mind, but the effort to grasp it was vain, and he turned away indifferently. Hildemund was not sorry to remember that he did not know one tune from another, and probably had never deigned to listen to his songs for five minutes, even if he so much as knew that the Bannwart's son had a voice at all.

He sang again and again, and the group around him became more numerous, attracted by his clear voice and skilful handling of his zither. Although Graf Redwitz had during the course of the journey relaxed something of his first vigilance, as he became assured of the Prince's entire unsuspiciousness,

he now glanced repeatedly towards him, for this was the first time that any stranger had been allowed to approach him, but assured that nothing private was passing amid so many bystanders, he gave himself up to the interest of the conversation between himself and the abbot.

Both the Prince and Hildemund were occupied with the same thought; time was passing and no word could be exchanged unheard. Unawares, one of the young nobles standing by came to their aid.

“This is the first time I ever saw a zither close,” he said; “it should need small skill to deal with so rustic a instrument.”

“Think you so, my lord?” said Hildemund smiling. “Will it please you try?”

The result of the attempt called forth a shout of laughter amid his companions, and one and another jestingly took the zither, and handled it with the same ill success. The abbot and von Redwitz looked round, and smiled to hear the laughter.

“Would your highness honour my poor instrument also?” said Hildemund. “Methinks you would find it more docile.”

“I fear it is less likely to flatter me than its master,” said Christopher, with a smile, and look and tone so strongly recalled his father that Hildemund could not forbear a bright, pleased glance

into his face as he said, "If you would allow me to show you how to handle the instrument, my lord; see, you must slip on this thumb ring, and use it thus. Permit me to show you—see, not so, but thus."

He put his hand upon that of the prince, and Christopher felt a small roll slid into his fingers.

"Nay, my lords," he said, looking up laughingly at the bystanders, "give back a little, I pray you, or I shall fail for very shamefacedness. This rustic instrument, as Bernard there calls it, is more hard to deal with than any lute or viol. I can make nought of it; a cat miscalling his rival by night gives forth sounds as sweet. The thing is sure bewitched!"

He pushed the zither back to Hildemund amid general mirth and jesting, and throwing him a gold piece, turned away as if weary of the amusement. That he would find means to read the warning conveyed to him, Hildemund did not doubt, and that he would act on it without hesitation, he hoped and believed. Although he took no further notice of Hildemund, he stood within hearing while one of the party asked whither the gleeman was going, and Hildemund ventured a meaning glance as he answered that he should attend the fair at Grünau, and hoped to have good success there.

Since he had seen the noble youth whom the pitiless policy of Charles V. had condemned to a cloister, and who was going so gaily and unsuspectingly to his doom, Hildemund was doubly resolved to save him at all costs. With earliest dawn he left the monastery, and made his way to Grünau, meeting one of Graf Eberstein's foster brothers on the road, and sending him back to say that so far all went well. Early as the hour was, throngs of travellers beside Hildemund were on the road, and the holiday attire from many districts showed that the wake of St. Willibald was a great event. The fair green valley, with its smiling pastures, and its background of snowy mountains with ice-fields in their laps, was gay with women in velvet bodices, broad hats or fur caps, and blue aprons over darker skirts, and men in much gayer attire, their red waistcoats contrasting with brown jackets and embroidered belts, and little plumes and gold tassels adorning their tall pointed hats. Hildemund noted what a fair, tall, fearless race they were. Elsewhere he had seen deep traces of the misery caused to high and low by the peasant war yet lingering, but it had hardly touched this valley, where serfdom was mild or unknown to the greater number of the inhabitants, who had never been ground down like the Thuringians and Franconians. Kindly glances and salu-

tations were cast to Hildemund as he passed, for these were a people passionately fond of song and dance, and a gleeman was highly welcome at such a time as this.

The little village came in sight, the green-tiled tower of the church brighter than any meadow, while its little roof looked as if a broad-brimmed hat had been clapped down on its head. The clear stream which had accompanied Hildemund for several miles was here spanned by a bridge, whose warder was exchanging greeting and jest with the passers-by. Booths had been erected round the church, and their owners were busily setting out their wares, with a little crowd of villagers looking on. Customers were flocking in and out of the village inn, which had for its sign St. Florian pouring a pail of water on a burning house, and a rude couplet in the local dialect, declaring "Home and goods trust I to Florian's name. Should he not keep it, his be the shame." The bells called to prayer, as they had done ever since four that morning; the hum of many voices floated on the air; friends and relations from distant homes met and greeted each other; new-comers kept appearing, sunlight bathed the fresh sweet meadows, and the mountain slopes, and the glaciers far overhead, and little mists, which had lost their way in the pine-

woods, went curling and floating upward, and melted away and vanished.

Hildemund was still too young and of too fresh and buoyant a nature not to enjoy the busy, animated scene, though he knew the moment was as critical for himself as for the Prince, and wondered more and more how Christopher was to escape unnoticed from such a crowd, who doubtless would all have their eyes upon him. Hildemund did not know that nobles and princes had no especial interest in the eyes of the Tyrolese, natural democrats, though admirably loyal, and that just then they cared more for their annual holiday than for anything or anyone outside of it.

While Hildemund looked round him, and calculated the chances of success, Prince Christopher was doing the same, with at least equal anxiety. With the first ray of daylight, while his companions slept, he had drawn forth and studied the little scroll. His pulses quickened as he saw it was signed by the father whose history had been so studiously kept from him, until Arnolph's revelation broke upon him. He could not have told whether the thought came unbidden, or if the monk had suggested it, but thenceforward he had resolved to escape from a captivity which, however disguised, was odious to him. He had welcomed this journey as partial

freedom; he learned that it was the path to life-long imprisonment.

No directions as to the method of flight could be given; for these he must trust to mother wit and fortunate chance, but he guessed that the attempt must be made at Grünau.

"My lord abbot," he said, as he took leave of the prelate; "I would I could have attended High Mass in this stately temple of yours, the more that to-day, Graf Redwitz tells me, we quit the soil of the fatherland. But since it may not be, farewell; I will hear Mass once more in Germany at Grünau."

"You will do well, my son," said the abbot; and they mounted and rode out of the abbey gates.

It was still early when they came to Grünau, and Graf Redwitz hesitated whether or not to push on further. "It were better we rode forward," he said, beckoning to one of the guides who accompanied the party. Christopher sat silent on his horse, looking on the gay and lively scene. He caught sight of Hildemund, standing near the church door, and playing on his zither, and then he looked to the mountains, with a wild longing to escape thither, and a cruel sense of helplessness.

"Well, then, since the next stage is so long, we

had best feed the horses here," said Graf Redwitz at last, as he threw his rein to an attendant.

"Then will I keep my promise to the good abbot of St. Willibald," said Christopher. "My lord, while you give such orders as you see fit, I will hear Mass."

"Do so, if it please your highness, and Junker Wolfgang and Bernard von Grumbach will attend you," said the Graf, turning to enter the little inn, where the crowd of guests left little room for his party, and small attention was shown when his name and rank were announced to the host, who evidently wished this distinguished party miles away, instead of calling for especial attention when all the world wanted food and drink at once on the busiest day of the whole year.

"Your highness is in time to see the picture of St. Gundula unveiled," said Hildemund, as the Prince came up with the young men deputed to attend him. "It is shown once a year to the pious, and miracles are worked by it."

"Aye, so? I am well pleased to have come at such a time," said Christopher, feeling this a good omen. "There is a prayer I would fain the holy martyr granted me."

"We shall scarce be able so much as to enter the vestibule," said Bernard von Grumbach, a hand-

some young courtier, who looked at the throng crowding to the door of the church with dainty disgust. "Pah! my lord, the very smell of these unsavoury churls turns my stomach."

"Well, stay without then," laughed the Prince. "Buy thee a blessed medal, or the history of the holy saint at yonder stall, where the merchant has a fair blue-eyed daughter; that is more to thy taste than telling thy beads."

"Fie, my lord, a peasant wench! Yet I will profit by your gracious permission," answered the young noble; "the eyes are blue indeed, and may merit a nearer look."

"And you, Junker Wolfgang?" said Christopher, longing to be rid of him also, but Wolfgang was not so easily to be shaken off.

"I would see the wonder-working picture, my lord," he said, with a perception that the Prince wished to avoid his company.

"Then buy a blessed taper for us both, while I enter," said Christopher, pointing to a stall close by, where consecrated candles, rosaries, crucifixes, and the like accompaniments of an occasion such as this were displayed.

Wolfgang turned to do so, and the Prince advanced to the vestibule of the church, crowded with

worshippers standing and kneeling, while the space beyond was densely filled.

“Is there room for one more worshipper, sorely in need to pray the holy saint’s help?” said Christopher, as he stood opposite the door in the screen which divided this outermost part of the building from the interior.

“Aye, sir,” was the answer, and the speaker moved slightly, and allowed him to pass within. Standing thus against the screen he had the whole congregation before him, closely packed in the ancient, dark oaken seats, and blocking up the nave and aisles. High Mass was almost over, and all faces turned with reverent devotion towards the altar at the east end. No one had a thought to waste on Christopher, and he too bent his head and prayed earnestly. When he looked up he saw that Hildemund was standing beside him, and a little knot of tall peasants immediately around, who Hildemund whispered were friends. “Your mantle, my lord,” Hildemund added; “now throw this over you, and make your way with Seppi as the crowd presses on after Mass to see the picture and hear the preacher discourse of it. See! by yonder little side door.”

It was with visible reluctance that the Prince assumed the monk’s robe, rapidly flung about him.

No one had seen the change of garb, no one was thinking of what passed, in a remote and dark part of the church, the least envied position, except those in the secret, for the foster brothers of Graf Eberstein had friends and kindred in Grünau who could be trusted at any pinch.

Wolfgang had elbowed his way as far as the door in the screen, but could get no further, and stood there furious to find the crowd move no more for his commands and maledictions than one of their own rocks might have done. He paid small heed as to whether he hurt woman or child, and more than one shriek arose, but he could not advance a step.

“You shall rue this, you saucy churls!” he exclaimed, but no one heeded him; the most solemn moment in the service was at hand, and a deep hush of reverence and awe absorbed the crowd. Not without a certain sense of religion, Wolfgang could not help being impressed, and stood quietly where he was until the preacher mounted the pulpit near the high altar, and unveiled the miraculous picture, the fame of which attracted annual crowds to Grünau. Close-packed as the crowd was, the eagerness to see and approach made all move a little forward, and Wolfgang could enter the interior of the building. At first he forgot all about Prince

Christopher, in his curiosity about the likeness of St. Gundula, a work of early art so dark and indistinct that it had to be taken altogether on trust. When the discourse which related her history and her miracles ended, there was a general movement; many left the church, others knelt at the various altars, especially that of the martyr of the day; a great number crowded to the confessionals. Wolfgang had looked several times for Christopher, but could see nothing of him. Now, at last, he caught sight of the green mantle at the further end of the church, near a confessional; doubtless the Prince was awaiting his turn. Wolfgang began to think of dinner, and wonder how long the Prince's devotions would continue. His companion now joined him, and after a short prayer he looked round and said, "How much longer tarry you here? Where is the Prince? Graf Redwitz bids me come and dine; he has waited a good half-hour."

"I was even now thinking of that very thing," said Wolfgang, "but the Prince was waiting his turn at yonder confessional."

"But where then is he?"

"He rose but now, and passed behind the altar; he is praying at some shrine, I take it. I saw his green mantle just now."

The church was still very full, and they advanced

slowly through the groups kneeling and standing about, looking for the Prince.

“He must have left the church while we passed behind the altar,” said von Grumbach, perplexed; “come on, Graf Redwitz will be ill pleased. He loves not to wait for any man.”

They hastened to the inn, where the Graf awaited them in considerable impatience.

“Know you not how late it grows?” he exclaimed as they entered; “where is the Prince?”

“Is he not here, my lord?”

“Here! no, else I had not asked you where he tarried. Wherefore did you leave him?”

“My lord, the unmannerly churls closed in and barred my way,” said Wolfgang; “these saucy knaves need a lesson which I hope you will read them.”

“You did ill to let the Prince out of sight,” said Graf Redwitz with angry displeasure. “Go, seek him. Nay, I will go myself.”

He went, but the search was vain. Prince Christopher was not in the church, and no inquiries elicited any information, except that a “green mantle” had been seen not many minutes earlier at a confessional. Graf Redwitz was beside himself with alarm and wrath. “To the bridge!” he cried; “if he were here so lately he cannot have crossed

it; question the bridgeward; let none pass unmarked. You, Hohenburg, ride up the other road out of the valley. I hold every man in this throng answerable to my Lord the Emperor if he escape. Hark you, Junker, tell me again how it chanced that you were parted from him. Von Grumbach, summon the Amtmann of Grtinau, and tell him he must answer it if the Prince of Wurtemberg get hence." Before Wolfgang had repeated his story, from which the Graf gathered only that the church had been thronged, and that the sturdy Tyrolese would not yield to his boyish insolence, the Amtmann had arrived. Graf Redwitz turned menacingly upon him. "There is treachery, Herr Amtmann. The Prince of Wurtemberg has gotten away secretly, a thing not possible save by aid of some here."

The Amtmann shrugged his broad shoulders. "Sir Graf, I for one knew not that he was in your company, any more than I know wherefore he flees it," he answered. "What is Wurtemberg to us? Waste no threats on me, for we are free folk, who will not brook them."

"Dogs of peasants!" muttered the Graf, while he looked anxiously around to see if any of his messengers were returning, but he knew how high was the spirit of these mountaineers, and how fearful

Charles V. was of rousing discontent among a border folk whose loyalty was so important, and, smoothing his brow, he said, "Nay, I spoke over hastily; the true Tyrol folk would lend no hand to treachery against their noble lord, and therefore I look to you, good Amtmann, for help in this matter. Plain it is that the Prince cannot have stolen away, and none know thereof; but there are many strangers here to-day, and among them doubtless men from Bavaria or Würtemberg. He cannot yet be far. What say you it were well to do? Counsel me what order to take."

"I will at once have proclamation made that none, under pain of treason, meddle in this matter, and that they tell all they know, and lend aid to your men, noble sir," answered the Amtmann, appeased. "Here, Niklas, blow the horn to call all hither."

They were standing outside the inn, and a crowd had already gathered; the bray of the horn brought double the number in a few minutes. The Amtmann related in a few words what had occurred, and bade all who had anything to tell speak freely. Graf Redwitz had suggested offering a large reward, but this the Amtmann had put aside with some displeasure.

"We are not used to take payment for speaking truth," he had replied.

Little was learned, however. A herdsman declared that he had seen the Prince without this mantle; another asserted that this was impossible, as he had marked him wrapped in it while listening to the sermon. Wolfgang broke into the conflicting and contradictory evidence by repeating that he had seen him kneeling near the confessional not ten minutes before von Grumbach joined him. Several voices confirmed the assertion, declaring that they had waited until the green mantle rose before they took their turn.

“Spake he to any?” asked von Redwitz, whose face grew each moment darker and more troubled.

No one could answer this, until von Grumbach, who felt himself in high disgrace, and was eager to atone for his neglect, exclaimed, “Yes, my lord—or rather, I would say, that gleeman who sang last night at St. Willibald spoke somewhat to the Prince without the church, and entered close behind him.”

“I would see that gleeman. Is he here?” asked Graf Redwitz.

“Aye, my lord! My lord, here is the green mantle,” exclaimed many voices all together, and Graf Redwitz looked eagerly round, but instead of the Prince he only saw the mantle handed over the heads of the crowd in one quarter, and

Hildemund put forward by a dozen eager hands in another.

“Where was the cloak found?” he asked, deeply disappointed.

“Folded within the chapel of St. Gundula,” cried several voices.

“The plot thickens,” muttered von Redwitz, looking from the mantle to Hildemund, who stood before him with a quiet, expectant air. “Fellow! what do you know of the Prince?”

“Little enough, my lord. I stood by him for awhile, and then lost sight of him when we all sought to press round the pulpit and see the holy picture.”

“Which way went he?”

“Towards the north door, my lord, but I saw him not again.”

“You lie, sirrah! he was seen later at the confessional at the other end of the church.”

“I only said I saw him no more, noble sir.”

There was a movement of eager expectation in the crowd, and the Graf half rose, as one of his messengers came hurrying back, breathless.

“Well!” he exclaimed.

“My lord,” he panted, “the bridge warden says none like unto the Prince has passed unless a young monk, or one who wore a monk’s dress; he noted

him, because he had not seen him come by in the morning."

"Pshaw! he and many here came from the southern end of the valley."

"Yes, my lord, but the wind took his cowl, and though he pulled it forward in haste, the warden marked his long fair hair, and thought it passing strange that a monk should own such locks."

"'Twas the Prince! 'twas Christopher!" exclaimed Graf Redwitz. "Was he alone?"

"No, my lord, others were crossing the bridge each way at the time, and the warden marked not whether he spoke to any."

"After him! Make speed for your lives! A monk's cowl . . . can the abbot——? I will back to the monastery; but 'tis vain, those who helped him hence will know how to hide him. How shall I face Charles?" muttered von Redwitz, in the deepest perplexity and alarm. "A monk's garb! Amtmann, would you have me believe he donned it unseen? Belike St. Gundula dropped it in his path, ha? I tell you there is foul treachery here."

"A monk's garb is speedily donned, my lord," said the Amtmann, much perturbed, "and the church has dark corners, but help he must have had, and the thing was surely planned long ere to-day."

“Aye, I noted he was changed yesterday. Hearken, gleeman, my mind misgives me thou hadst a hand in this; no stranger else has had speech of the Prince,” said von Redwitz, bending his eyes threateningly on Hildemund, who answered quietly, “No word passed between us unheard, my lord; never had I speech of Prince Christopher in secret.”

“My lord, think you he wore the green mantle in place of the Prince?” asked Wolfgang, suddenly. “I bethink me now that he who knelt at the confessional had no long locks, and was marvellous like this fellow.”

“Thought of somewhat late,” said von Redwitz, giving a penetrating look at Hildemund, whose face changed. “So! his face tells a tale. Whence art thou, varlet?”

“A gleeman has no country, my lord,” answered Hildemund, sure that to name the Ilzthal would secure his destruction.

“What! is that thy answer? Konrad, string me up this knave to the inn sign yonder.”

“My lord, you will not take my life for so light a cause,” pleaded Hildemund, “a matter that Junker Wolfgang cannot prove nor I disprove?”

“How know you his name so well?” asked von Redwitz, signing to his officials to wait.

"I have heard it, noble sir; that young lord spoke it but now."

"Aye, so I did," said von Grumbach, who had been greatly taken with Hildemund the evening before.

"My lord! my lord! I know who he is!" exclaimed Wolfgang, who had been staring with knitted brows at Hildemund; "I knew I had seen him before! A pestilent fellow for whom a halter is too good; his name is Hildemund Dahn."

"Is this so?" asked the Graf.

"Yes, my lord," said Hildemund, resolutely. He had seen it would come, but more than the half-hour had been gained, and the Prince must by now be out of reach.

"He does not deny it!" shouted Wolfgang, in triumph. "String him up as my lord bade, Konrad."

"Wherefore should I deny an honest name?" said Hildemund.

"Yet wert thou strangely slow to own thou knewst aught of the Junker," said von Redwitz. "What mystery is here? What do you know of the knave, Sir Wolfgang?"

"My lord, it is a saucy fellow whom I had chastised as he merits long ago, had he but crossed my path; but he shall not escape now," said Wolfgang, all the savageness of his nature showing in look and voice.

"I know not how this bears on the matter of the Prince," said von Redwitz, who, though he cared nothing for so slight a thing as whether a gleeman were hung or not, was very reluctant to lose the smallest chance of a clue. "Speak, fellow."

"Nay, my lord, if I must speak the truth, I wished not, as you may think, to be known of the Junker, and therefore, seeing he knew me not, I named not my birthplace, for when last we met we were at strife."

"At strife! thou and a noble knight," said von Redwitz, with contempt.

"He was not a knight then, my lord; we were both boys, and we fell out."

"Wherefore?"

"About a Dompfaff," said Hildemund, and in spite of his peril there was an arch laugh in his eyes. A great burst of mirth came from the crowd, and Graf Redwitz himself smiled grimly.

"There, my lord, said I not he was a saucy knave?" exclaimed Wolfgang.

"Was this all the cause of strife?" the Graf asked.

"Noble sir, he would not yield the bird at my bidding," said Wolfgang, sullenly, looking at the laughing crowd with angry eyes.

"This should rather be a case for the spiritual than the secular courts," observed the Amtmann,

gravely; "the ecclesiastics are ill pleased when laymen meddle with their matters."

"Pshaw! this is no time for jesting," said von Redwitz, impatiently; "we waste time. Varlet gleeman, speak truth as you value your neck! whence and what are you?"

"My father was banner-bearer to Graf von Geyer, my lord; I am a free man, and dwell on Geyer'schen lands," answered Hildemund.

"In Thuringia, then," said the Graf considerably perplexed, for this seemed to snap all link between the gleeman and Würtemberg. "Banner-bearer to Max von Geyer, and thou a gleeman!"

"My father died young, my lord, and I love song and zither."

"I may not lose time thus," said von Redwitz, impatiently; "but I believe in my heart thou hast earned a short shrift and a noose."

"Nay, noble sir," cried a voice in the crowd, "who shall then make music for us? A man can scarce sing with a halter round his neck. Give us the gleeman; no man shall be hung on the feast day of the valley."

There was a great shout of assent, and Graf Redwitz, unwilling to displease those whose assistance in finding the fugitive he so greatly needed, answered:

“Be it so, then; get thee gone, sirrah, since nought is proved against thee. Nay, Sir Wolfgang, no more; if I do not hang him for mine own affairs, I scarce can for thine. Make not yourself a laughing-stock to the peasant pack,” he added, in a lowered tone of impatient anger, and Wolfgang drew back scowling, and casting a look on Hildemund which boded no good. The crowd received Hildemund into their midst with a tumult of laughter and rejoicing, and a voice said, at his ear, “St. Wilibald and St. Gundula be praised! I would not have given a brass farthing for your neck ten minutes ago.”

He recognised Andreas, one of Graf Eberstein’s foster brothers.

“If you had not spoken for me, I know not whether the noose were not round it now,” he answered. “And——?”

Andreas answered the unspoken question with a nod of triumph. Graf Redwitz was again consulting with the Amtmann, and questioning some of the men who had returned from a vain search up one valley, but the throng were too indifferent to the escape of a fugitive whose very name was unknown to them to pay more attention to him. Hildemund was a far more important personage: fifty voices were calling for a song, and he must put aside all

the feelings swelling in his heart, and lend himself to the humours of the day. A circle formed round him; and though his first notes were so husky and tremulous as to astonish and provoke himself, and cause a good-natured cry of "He feels the noose about his neck! A cup of wine here to wash his throat," his voice soon rose clear and full, as the sense of a great danger escaped, a desperate attempt successful, became uppermost in his mind, and filled him with glad exultation. The bystanders caught his mood, and joined with deep, ringing voices in the chorus of his song. "Wir lieben, du liebest, sie lieben," they sang joyously, snapping their fingers, and waving their tall hats in time to the music. They hardly looked round when the troop of Graf Redwitz rode back to St. Willibald, but Hildemund by-and-by noted that a couple of men had been left behind, partly, he suspected, to keep an eye on his movements.

This altered his plans. Instead of joining the fugitives he saw he must make his way back to Hohentwiel alone, announcing his change of plan through Andreas, and he remained a day or two in the valley to disarm suspicion. Andreas offered to conduct him by paths known only to chamois hunters, but he believed that the most open course was the safest, and, finding that some of the traders

who had come to the fair were returning to Nürnberg, he asked leave to join them, as far as their ways lay together, letting it be known that he was returning to the Ilzthal. Consent was readily given, for one of the merchants was a lover of music, and Hildemund's voice pleased him well.

Hildemund was really going to the Ilzthal. He had a great longing to see Herr Basil, and he wanted to tell Ulfric the strange sayings of the monk who had called himself Thomas Knades. He could not but think that some dark and sinful story in the monk's past had driven him into the cloister, rather than any true vocation.

Now that the Prince had escaped, and that danger to himself gone by whose extent he had been so well aware of that he had fully believed he was making his last shrift at the confessional, he could think of little else than the tale which the monk had well-nigh told and then held back, saying it must be for no ear but that of Ulfric. Hildemund shrewdly suspected that this black story would prove to be intimately connected with Graf von Lichtenberg.

CHAPTER X.

THE passing years had brought few outward changes to Basil von Below. He had used no interest to procure his transfer to a larger and more public sphere of labour, but had, as at first, accepted his exile silently, and allowed himself to be forgotten, discouraging all offers from his family to urge his recall. Yet the isolation whose chill waters had benumbed him when first he came to the Ilzthal had hardly lessened. Could he have felt his life one with that of his flock, he would have become deeply attached to his work. He shared their sufferings with an intensity none guessed, he burned at their wrongs with indignation the hotter that he was powerless against them. His unwearied efforts to lighten the general misery after the destruction of the village had awakened some grateful wonder and affection, but when bondage again weighed down the peasantry, harder, heavier than ever, the old dull despair and suspicion of the upper classes sank like lead on the hearts of his flock, and he found himself again viewed as one of these hostile orders, not only better born than they, and therefore their natural enemy, but, being a priest, as one of those who introduced and upheld that Roman code which had replaced the old national laws, and

to whose introduction they traced the extinction of the assemblies in which the Bauer could make his voice heard, and the gradual loss of one right after another. Here the Lutheran preachers had an advantage; they were known to heed little the dictates of canon law, and the people listened the more readily.

No words can describe the desolate disappointment of Herr Basil when he perceived that it was but for a short time that the hearts of his people had turned to him, and that, though he could influence and win men of his own class and among the burghers, he had not, never should have, the key of these which he longed so painfully to gain. A man infinitely less good, devout, tender, might have done tenfold more among them than he could. Here and there he touched one and another; his labour was not absolutely fruitless, as he believed, exaggerating in his discouragement his ill success, but on the whole there could only be a galling sense of failure. He agonised for their souls, and nothing came of it. Even his preaching had ceased to attract as it had done at first. The population of the valley had been more than decimated; generations must be born before it could be what it had been, and those who lived had sunk too deeply into hopeless despair to be roused to interest. Fallen

even below the level of prostration, "their complaining but a sigh," suffering produced deep spiritual torpor. Later the Reformation breathed new life into their benumbed hearts, but for a time they were crushed and paralysed by the outcome of the war.

To Ulfric these long years had been even less eventful than to the priest of the Ilzthal; their history was that of such a struggle to attain a resignation which should not be only despair as few souls know. If he did not attain it—if, when he thought the battle won, and that he had offered up his will, a living sacrifice, some merest trifle, a recollection, a sound, a scent on the summer wind, arousing some old association, would plunge him into an anguish of memories and longing, and, worst of all, show that the struggle must be all gone through again, and that his victory was but delusion—at least he did not yield. Struck down again and again, faith almost lost in crowding doubts and questionings why this lot was his, perhaps, but for Herr Basil, he would have succumbed. Amid all the manifold doubts which besieged the priest himself, his absolute belief in prayer, his intense personal love of his Master were never shaken, and upheld the leper in his hard warfare. But the help which Basil gave was less than that

which he himself gained from beholding this noble effort at submission, this long struggle willingly to offer up body and soul. Unconsciously the priest unveiled more of his inner self, his secret thoughts, his restless questionings, than Ulfric ever revealed in return. The one, craving sympathy, was soothed by knowing another occupied with his sorrows and cares; the other dared not dwell on a past which the present turned to gall. How endure his actual life, if he dwelt on that so rich and full of promise which once was his? Basil did not know even his name, nor his early history, nor when and how the curse came on him. He had heard his confession indeed many times, for to one like Basil von Below this leper could not appear dead and cut off from holy ordinances, but he asked no questions, and sought to know nothing which Ulfric did not volunteer. His sensitive, scrupulous delicacy forbade such a use of the confessional as many of his brethren made, thinking neither shame nor ill. That Ulfric was of gentle breeding he early perceived, and he gathered that from the convent where his mother retired when he was lost to her, she sent him by a trusty hand ample means to supply his needs, but he had no suspicion that the leper of the Eschthal was the nephew of Graf Lichtenberg, or that on his revenues the Graf had first

climbed to fortune and place. Ulfric was not aware that legally he might have retained them, nor, had he known it, would he have cared to do so. What could money and lands do for an outcast such as he?

An unusually long time had passed since Basil's last visit, and Ulfric wondered many times what detained him. He might have learned, had he gone into the Ilzthal, that the Pfarrer was absent, for the first time since he came to his post, but Ulfric shrank from the "scornful looks averse" of those who saw him, and who held it a pious duty to show their loathing of one thus Heaven-stricken. It had only been through intercourse with Ulfric, and by slow degrees, that Herr Basil himself had shaken off the belief that some special sin was marked and chastised in those whom leprosy claimed as victims; but such a facile way of displaying piety as was offered by showing abhorrence of such guilty wretches was not to be neglected by those ordinary sinners on whom no such mark was set. The very children would hoot, at safe distances, when a leper passed; Ulfric had seen a dog killed because it had run up and brushed his garment. Without absolute necessity he never went into the village, now rebuilt, and scantily populated by inhabitants, many of whom would bear to their dying day in brand and mutilation tokens of their share in the peasant war. He

waited, sure that Basil would not fail to come as soon as he could, but it was with increasing wonder that Ulfric counted the days which went by without bringing him.

He came at last, and there was on his face that look of pure and lofty joy which Ulfric had sometimes seen there when a great gladness had come to one of his flock, or a soul had been saved out of great peril; yet his aspect was of one so worn and spent that it was plain he had been through some crisis which had exhausted him bodily and mentally.

“You have come at last!” Ulfric said, answering his call, and advancing to the mouth of his cave.

“I have come. You have wondered what delayed me?”

“I knew well you could come no sooner, else you had not let me want you so long.”

“You are right,” and then he paused and looked at him before adding, “I have been to Göppingen, summoned there by one who could not gain leave to come and meet me, but who, sent thither on a mission by his abbot, called me to him.”

“One whom you know? Friend or kinsman?”

“No, neither,” said Herr Basil, with an intonation which Ulfric could not explain, and then he paused again, as if he had somewhat to say which he could not easily put into words.

"No, neither friend nor kin, but one who had a tale to tell me concerning a most dear friend; and, to tell it, must first make known his own unhappy story. For this monk had been one who felt within himself the longing and the power to rise among his fellow men hot within his heart, but poverty and humble station held him down, until he met with one like-minded to himself, and saw through him the way to fortune. But the first stepping-stone was a crime."

"A crime?" Ulfric repeated, moved and struck by the suppressed thrill and excitement in the priest's voice.

"A crime so black, so treacherous, that scarce could he face the thought, and long he held back after the foul thing first entered his mind, long tarried ere he spoke thereof to him who should chiefly profit thereby; but the fiend got the mastery over him, and he did the thing, and had rich guerdon, and went his way to fill a high post procured for him by the partner of his crime."

"And then?" Ulfric asked, in much surprise that Herr Basil should speak thus openly, for surely only in confession could he have learned such a tale.

"All prospered with him, and men praised him much, and he thought of that which he had done but now and then; perchance in the dead of night,

if he lay awake while all was still, or when somewhat on a sudden recalled it to him. But because he had not reached that meridian of evil after which conscience is dumb, and a man sins smoothly and sleekly and feels no pang, God had pity on his soul, and sent presently such searching ill as made all which he ate and drank bitter, and one day as a year of hell. Needs not to speak longer thereof, better far thus than if Heaven had let him go on a silken way, and kept that crime to look him in the face at the Judgment. At last he would have sought to buy pardon by undoing the evil which he had wrought, but nowhere could he hear aught of his victim. And here again Heaven was merciful to him, for he had to learn what a man has done he cannot undo; no, though he weep tears of blood. He can but commend it unto Him with whom there is neither past nor future, because all is present."

"You speak as if I knew this man," said Ulfric, gazing earnestly at the priest.

"Truly, and but too well. But hear me. When he found he could not appease his conscience he entered a convent, and sought in many austerities to find peace. He had fled the world only to find it again in the cloister and in his own heart. Seeing in him a man keen of wit, and well versed in worldly matters, his superiors turned him to account, and

set him to labour for Holy Church and the glory of his order. And ever he grew more bitter and scornful, and lost such faith as he had, until scarce a shred remained. Would you know the name of this unhappy man? In the world it was Thomas Knades."

Ulfrik started, and shuddered from head to foot.

"Thomas Knades! What have I done that I should be minded of him?" he said, with intolerable pain and humiliation.

"You ask nothing of his crime?" said Herr Basil, gently.

"No—no, I would hear no more. You do not know—or you had not had the heart to speak of him to me—what that name calls back."

"Nay, I know all."

"All!" Ulfrik exclaimed, with vehemence. "None but my own soul and God know half what the very sound brings to my mind. It was he—he—the leech Thomas Knades—it was he who saw the signs in me that doomed me to this living death."

"You speak more truly than you know, my brother."

Ulfrik started, and gazed at him. "I know not what you mean," he said, and there was a sound of wonder and fear in his voice.

"That will I presently make clear; but first, let

me tell how this man, ever pursued by avengers crueler than the fabled Erinnys, who shake their fiery scourge above the guilty, grew well-nigh madened by the thought of his sin, which, as he deemed, had brought Heaven's anger upon all dear to him, and believing his chief victim dead (chief, for others had at many times suffered through him; he came not at once to that worst crime), he lost all hope, and made, as I say, shipwreck, and even when at length he learned that the one whom he had worst harmed yet lived, he saw no light. For, see you, this unhappy man looked only into his own evil heart, and, never lifting his eyes to the pure manhood of his Lord, judged man and God by what he saw in himself."

"And could you do nought for one whom you pity thus?"

"Little, alas! so little that I know not if I did aught. No word of mine seemed to reach him, and he has forgotten how to pray, if he ever knew it. The heaven seems as brass above him, and the earth as iron beneath him. All I could gain was that if he whom he worse than slew would go to him and freely pardon, then would he believe that God could pardon too.

"Is it so hard then to pardon this thing that he has done?" asked Ulfric, much agitated, though he

scarcely knew why. The deep, suppressed emotion with which Herr Basil spoke, and his last words, conveyed a dim, perplexed conviction that this story touched himself.

“Yes, my brother,” answered Herr Basil, in the gentlest, most appealing tones of his full, rich voice; “so hard that the dear Master who appoints each his lot would only have set such a task to one whom He greatly loved and trusted, one who will not disappoint Him now—a man who has been chosen long to bear a heavy cross which no one could lighten for him nor any way share. And because he has been a good and faithful servant and soldier, now his Captain bids him do something yet greater, and save a soul for Him. That shall be his reward for what he has endured—surely meed enough if he may stand in the last day before his Lord and say, ‘Behold, I bring Thee this soul which Thou gavest me to save from everlasting death.’”

“Is it of me that you speak?” asked Ulfric. “What have I to forgive? This man—this Knades—spake but the cruel truth. I owe him no grudge for that: I forgive him as I would the doomster who struck me at the judge’s bidding with his axe.”

“Aye, if it had been no more. Nay, peace? Hear me yet a moment—hear me as patiently as you may, dear friend and brother, and God help

you to listen without cursing that most sinful and wretched man who worked your woe. Your mother in her charity housed him, poor and needy, when you were scarce yet grown to manhood, was it not so?"

"Yes. My mother!" repeated Ulfric; "my mother whose heart broke for my sake. Speak not of her; that I have no courage to remember."

"Then came tidings that your brother had fallen in battle, and that you, alas! were heir to all—you, a youth newly knighted, and there was no life but yours between the lands and one whom you perchance will find it as hard to forgive as Thomas Knades—a man who has risen to honour and high place, and repents not of anything he has done."

"My uncle of Lichtenberg."

"Then, a man well-nigh as poor and altogether as ambitious as Knades, who saw in the joyous and well-loved youth, who filled the castle with sweet music and sweeter songs and brave young life, the thing that held him back from a great career and high place."

"It doubtless was so; I thought not of it then."

"That I well believe, but he pondered ever thereon, and the lust of ambition, the longing for that wealth which should give him power, grew always greater; and seeing the like passions in the

breast of the leech, whose heart he read as a book open and plainly writ, he gave him to understand that he who put the stumbling-block out of his way should rise with him."

"I know not what you would say. . . . Sought they to take my life?"

"At that the Graf hinted, but Knades liked it ill. He would not take life, but he gave the Graf to believe that by a drink, cunningly prepared, he could bring the curse of leprosy on man or beast."

"He—he did that!—God of heaven!" exclaimed Ulfric.

There was a silence; the priest watched him with an intensity of anxiety and supplication which seemed to strain his very soul. Then Ulfric broke forth with a cry like that of one in mortal pain.

"He did that! that! He would not take my life—oh, mocking fiend, did he not doom me to a thousand deaths? All these years—all these endless years—all those yet to come! How had I harmed him that he thus gave me over, body and soul, to this misery? And my mother, my mother—when I think on her anguish . . . her one son, all left her! Can this thing be true?"

"He has suffered perchance the more of you twain," said Pfarrer Basil.

"Would I knew it! then had I indeed revenge.

I would not wish even such a foe as he a fuller cup of pain than mine has been—mine, which he set to the lips of one who never hurt him!"

"I know not that, for he, proud and poor, took many a light word amiss, perhaps never meant for him, and even such a joyous youth as yours was gall unto him."

Ulfric did not heed. He continued with increasing passion, "I have sought, aye, that much you know, to bear my lot patiently, thinking it set by God, and now to learn it was man's doing, for guerdon."

"Yet none the less permitted by God," said the priest.

"Speak not so, Herr Prediger, lest I think Heaven accomplices with this vile traitor in my misery! And this Graf, this prosperous, high-placed traitor—is there no justice anywhere that such a man walks smiling and sleek under the sky?"

Herr Basil made no answer. His sad and troubled gaze rested silently on the leper.

"You bid me forgive!" Ulfric exclaimed; "your eyes reproach me that I have no word of pardon. Measure if you can, before you talk of forgiveness, what this leech, this Thomas Knades, has done to me; think what my life might have been, how fair, how full of brave deeds and sweet love; how, but

for him, I had walked gladly among my fellow men, and praised God for His good gifts. What is it? What must it be until death comes? Lothly to all men, and most of all to myself. No hand shall ever touch mine; no eye look on me with love; no heart ever beat on mine, nor any be the better that I have lived. Even my gift of song has left me; no lay comes any more to cheer my desolation. I am dead, yet I cannot die."

"It is most true."

"Aye, most true; that is honestly said. And, knowing this, seeing what I am, you can ask me to pardon and pity the man who wrought such wrong? And doubtless also my fair uncle of Lichtenberg, who, indeed, was the kinder of the two, for had he had his will I were now out of this world."

"Yes, Ulfric, I ask no less. I know not if I myself could do this thing; perchance not; no such hard task has been given me; I am not worthy that my Lord should ask it of me. But He has seen you worthy; this thing is offered you to do, no knightly deed such as all would magnify, not anything which men know and praise, but somewhat to do for His sake. He has held you back from passing joys and worldly honours, nor given you aught that the frail human heart longs after; He has set you apart in a solitude with Himself, and

now He comes, and by my lips offers you a work to do for Himself which no other can. I tell you the soul of this man is given to you; will you have it or not? Nay, I will say more: will you save it as a thankoffering for the lot given you? Surely hereafter you will see that you would have chosen it and no other had you known all things as He does. How can you say that, had life run smooth and clear, you had not been such a one as Graf Lichtenberg; and many a one who is honoured among men, yet is fouler at heart than ever was leper's body?"

"You say all this—yet you yourself have shrunk from the sight of me," said Ulfric, with bitterness.

"God forgive me!" said Herr Basil, covering his face with his hands, and the anguish in his tones was as keen as any which Ulfric had felt.

Ulfric sat bowed and mute. The flow of the stream and the rustle in the branches alone broke the hush, as the summer breeze came and went, laden with the odours of the pine-trees and shaking down the wild rose petals from the bushes on the cliff overhead.

"It goes, then, very sore with this Thomas Knades?" he said at last.

"So sore that despair has well-nigh lost his soul," answered Herr Basil.

“And he craves so greatly for pardon?”

“As one in a desert craves for water.”

“What moved him to call for you and tell all?”

“Sent to Hohentwiel, he heard our Hildemund sing a lay which he remembered as yours, and he had come hither himself, had he known but where to seek you, and owned the truth.”

“Ah!” said Ulfric, as if the thought of the meeting were insupportable. “It is well he came not.”

Again there was a long silence. The priest prayed fervently, with folded hands, his eyes on Ulfric, following with keen sympathy the struggle in his breast.

Rising at length, the leper said, in a grave, deep tone, “Since my Lord will have no other work of me in this His world, and since He gives me this bitter thing to do for His sake, I will at least do it willingly, lest though there be oil and wood, I bring no lamp to the sacrifice. Bear my pardon to Thomas Knades; nay, if he will not believe otherwise, I will seek him myself, and tell him that since the man whom he has thus injured can forgive, he may look with good hope to the mercy of Him for whose sake I do this.”

Herr Basil stood up, his countenance illumined with a joy so pure and lofty, that Ulfric thought,

whenever he recalled it, that it would be the look he would wear in Paradise.

“Blessed be the dear Lord by whose grace you have done this, my brother,” he said, stretching out his hands in blessing. “The soul of your enemy shall be given you, and not this only. And now hear: He who knew you would do this for His sake has yet another message for you. Because you have meekly accepted shame and ignominy, and taken up your cross at His bidding, He has now other work for you: He bids you arise and go forth, not Ulfric the leper, but a man free and pure from all stain and sickness.”

“Alas! would you have me believe a miracle shall be worked for such as I?”

“Dear son, cast aside these wrappings, and see if there be any sign of the foul disease upon you?”

“Nay, there is none, but it ever lurks in the blood it has once tainted; all know it may for a while disappear, yet only to return.”

“True, alas! and therefore he who has fallen under its clutch may return no more among his kind,” said Herr Basil, who held the notions as to leprosy universal in his day; “but hearken, Ulfric, for I have tidings of great joy for you. This Knades played the Graf false; no such power had he as he feigned. A drug, indeed, he gave, which brought

you nigh to death, and none doubted, since he was known to be a learned leech, that he spake sooth when he whispered that you were sick of leprosy. None sought to know more; his word sufficed, and all hurried to bury the thing in secrecy for the honour of your kindred."

"They did," said Ulfric, with a deep gloom. The bearing of all which Herr Basil was saying was so alien to everything which he had believed through these years of wretchedness that he could hardly comprehend it.

"And thus the deceit was easily carried out," Basil added; "but leper you never were."

Ulfric answered only by a dizzy gesture. All was reeling before his eyes. "I—I dream," he said.

"It is no dream," answered the priest; "blessed be God, it is no dream, and blessed be He that to me He has given the joy of bidding you return from the dead into the world of living men."

He laid his hand on Ulfric's head as he spoke, and for the first time in sixteen years the outcast of the Eschthal felt the touch of a fellow man.

CHAPTER XI.

HERR BASIL undertook, with a sort of childlike joy and pleasure, to procure for Ulfric garments

such as he must have before returning to ordinary life. The delay was more trying to Basil than to Ulfric himself; for while the priest was all eager impatience to conduct him to Thomas Knades, Ulfric shrank with sensitive reluctance from facing his fellow men after the long seclusion in which he had lived, and craved time to realise all which he had heard. Notwithstanding his quick sympathy, Basil did not guess that Ulfric found it not less but more difficult to pardon the monk, when he learned that at any time during all these years he might have resumed his place in the world. It brought a cruel sense of unreality in his trial, of wasted struggle, full of distress. But when he knelt in the church of the Ilzthal, while Herr Basil said a mass on his behalf, the austere joy of self-sacrifice, the gladness that he had a gift to lay before the altar which cost him much, revealed itself to him and flooded his soul, and then, as one newly baptised, he took up life again, strengthened and ennobled by the long battle which he had fought, and by the great victory which had crowned it. His heart seemed to open to life and joy, and a thousand sweet possibilities, and it was a full and free pardon which he bore to Thomas Knades.

Herr Basil came back alone. By him, also, a turning point in life had been reached, though none

knew it but himself, and he needed to prepare for what lay before him.

Of all these things Hildemund, slowly making his way to the Ilzthal, of course knew nothing. He had quitted his disguise as soon as he dared do so, and was returning to his birthplace, not as a gleeman or a fugitive, but as the body squire of the Duke, with the confident hope of knighthood before him. Of Prince Christopher he had heard nothing but rumours, blown about, that he had escaped from captivity, and was concealed by his uncles of Bavaria. Hildemund thought it not unlikely that by-and-by he would seek their court, and appeal to their powerful protection, but felt sure that he was now either at Hohentwiel, or on his road thither, with Graf Eberstein, and he could picture the rejoicings that Christopher's arrival would occasion. The position of Ulrich was totally changed by the escape of his heir out of Austrian hands. Charles V. had never been able to bring forward any valid pretext why the Prince should not have succeeded to his father's dukedom, whatever the offences of Ulrich might have been; but, while he could be held a prisoner, the Emperor troubled himself not at all as to this, and turned a deaf and contemptuous ear to all remonstrances. Ulrich had had few friends and many enemies, and no one had

interfered on his behalf, but when it became clear that Würtemberg would be annexed to the other vast possessions of Habsburg, the Electors looked on with rising alarm and jealousy. Now, no doubt, they would call for an answer why the duchy was withheld from both father and son, for Christopher would not fail to put forth his claims, and, recollecting what a gallant and noble youth he seemed, Hildemund could not believe that he would seek to profit at his father's expense. It might be that Archduke Ferdinand would have to resign Würtemberg without a blow. If so, Ulrich was no man to let his tried and faithful follower go unrewarded.

It was of no guerdon to himself that Hildemund was thinking. Now, as ever, his first thought was for Dornröschen. The Duke had promised to right her, and he would keep his word, even though he owed a certain debt of gratitude to Graf von Lichtenberg for his secret warning as to the designs on Prince Christopher. But then—what then? Hildemund knew that the young heiress of Burgstein and Rosenthal would be a prize eagerly sought, but the prospect was as yet far off, and it was the cud of sweet far more than of bitter fancies that he was chewing as he rode into the Ilzthal, thinking of the proud gladness with which his mother

and yet more Dornröschen would hear that he had won his spurs at Duke Ulrich's hand.

He crossed the stream by a ford well known to him, some half mile from the village, and suddenly came in sight of the Burgstein. Far overhead stood the ruins of the castle, and the sun glinted on the silvery Pöllatwasser. Yonder was the church, niched under the Rossberg, and there the group of trees which had borne such a fatal burden when last he saw them. Again he could fancy he saw the dead bodies and the crowd lamenting below. The village had been rebuilt on the old foundations, and the summers and winters, the sun and rain, which had already swept over it had taken away all look of freshness. Hildemund could almost have fancied it the old hamlet, but children whom he did not know were straying on the green, and there were grown men and women at work in the fields who had been boys and girls when he left the Ilzthal.

As he drew rein to let a woman pass, carrying a heavy web of linen from the bleaching field, she stopped and looked up, astonished at such unusual courtesy from a Junker, and something about her seemed familiar to him.

“Is the Geistliche Herr at home, good woman?” he asked, more to make her speak than because he wanted a reply.

“I know not, fair sir,” she answered, still gazing at him, as if on her side, too, were a dim recognition, and then he knew her, in spite of the change from a comely lass to a haggard woman, whose age might have been sixty rather than under thirty, but it was in incredulous tones that he exclaimed:

“Bärbele!”

“That is my name,” she answered, greatly surprised, and with a touch of alarm.

“Do you not know me, Bärbele?”

“Herrje! it cannot be! Mary and Joseph! it is not Hildemund Dahn?”

“Yes, it is. I have come back to see the old home.”

“Mary and Joseph!” she repeated, staring at him, “sure you have become a noble?”

“Not so, but a squire now, and soon, I hope, a knight.”

“Good luck!” said Bärbele, unable to recover her astonishment. “There are, then, some with whom the world has gone well!”

“I fear greatly it has not done so with you, my poor Bärbele. Did Gerhardt come home from the war?”

“Holy Virgin! do not speak of that!” she exclaimed under her breath, with a terrified glance round her. “Yes, he came back.

“But you are not married,” said Hildemund, seeing by her dress and unringed hand that she was unwedded.

“No!” she answered fiercely, “would you have me bear children to be as miserable as ourselves?”

“Poor Bärbele!” said Hildemund, full of pity, and look and tone touched her, and seemed to melt the apathetic despair which usually marked her air, and she said, “The dear Frau—lives she yet? Ah, we have missed her sorely.”

“She grieved much to leave you so suddenly, but life and more turned on speedy and secret flight.”

“That I can well believe,” said Barbara, moving on beside him. “Ah, Junker Hildemund, we have seen black days! My little lady! Some of us would fain that like her we had perished up yonder! Yet I would she had lived. I have wept often for her, till I had no tears left except for my own troubles, and I think I have none left even for them.”

She was looking up to the Burgstein as she spoke, and Hildemund considered whether he dared now tell her that Rosilde was safe, but she stopped him by exclaiming with a start, “Holy Mary! this is no place for you. I had forgot, but the bailiff has bidden any who see you bear him speedy word thereof if they value their lives, for he has orders from Sir Wolfgang to seize and hold you fast. But

he spoke of a gleeman—it was as a gleeman he thought to find you."

"So!" said Hildemund, considerably startled. "Is this my welcome? Think you any will know me, Bärbele?"

She stood still and looked at him.

"Scarcely; I had not done so had you not called me by name. I knew the voice, but all else is so changed that even now I can scarce believe mine eyes."

"Less changed than yourself, poor girl," Hildemund thought to himself, observing with fresh pity and wonder the havoc which hardships and grief had wrought.

"I mean not to linger here," he said, aloud, "but I must see Herr Basil, and my old home, and one other friend. Take this for my sake, Barbara."

He pressed a piece of money into her hand, and rode across to the presbytery. A neighbour or two who had seen her speaking with him came from their doorways to ask who the young knight was.

"One who seeks the Pfarrer," she answered, and no suspicion was excited.

Herr Basil sat in his little chamber, leaning his head on his hand, and looking out of his window, with a far-off, absorbed gaze, which showed his

mind was elsewhere. He at least was little altered, Hildemund thought, as he stood looking at him for an instant before he spoke his name. The sound made him start, yet he looked round absently, as if still so occupied with his thoughts that he could hardly bring them back to what was immediately before him. Hildemund smiled and spoke again, and then a glad flash of recognition came on the priest's face, and he stood up, and held out his hands with warm welcome.

"My son! Is this, too, given me?" he said, bending his head in thanksgiving. "I had not dared to hope this; more is granted me than I asked. Tell me whence you come, and all the story of these years."

Hildemund had never seen him so simply glad and tender. He told of the perilous task in which he had been engaged. "I would fain you said a mass and gave thanks for me, honoured sir," he added, "both for the Prince's escape and my own, for indeed I scarce thought to return. Even now I know not how it was that Wolfgang von Lichtenberg did not bring up against me the burning of the castle and my sharing in the war; I had been a lost man had he but done so."

"Perhaps he knew nought thereof. I take it his father was so greatly displeased at the order he

took here, that the bailiff and all others concerned in burning the village spake as little ever after of it as they could. Yes, that mass I will surely say, but I fear you may not tarry to assist at it, my son, though perchance the bailiff may fear to lay hands on a young squire such as thou art become, when he looked but for a poor vagrant gleeman."

"I know—Barbara told me. How pitifully she is changed! Can so few years have done this?"

"Alas! she has not suffered more than others here. Want and fear and toil age the very children."

"I would she and her parents, if they yet live, could have had our empty house. The good senechal's family!"

"You forget they may not leave Burgstein lands for those of another lord."

"Aye, so I did. I would fain have done something for old Walther's family."

"It is hard to bid thee go, my dear son, yet I would thou wert safely hence."

"Come what may, I must see Ulfric ere I leave the valley."

"Thou art headstrong as ever! Just so didst thou answer when last we met!" said Herr Basil, smiling. "But thou wilt not find Ulfric in the Eschthal. Stay, thou must eat and drink ere de-

parting, and when the food is before thee I will tell thee a tale."

He put such provisions as he had upon the table, and Hildemund said, "I see by your tone, reverend sir, that nought is amiss with Ulfrik, but whither then is he gone? I had somewhat to tell him of the strange monk of whom I spoke but now, he who came to Hohentwiel."

"Aye! But perhaps I can tell thee more of this Thomas Knades than thou canst tell me," said Herr Basil.

Hildemund listened with amazement only equalled by his joy and indignation.

"No leper! blessed be the saints! What black treachery! St. Lazarus of Jerusalem! How could he forgive this man? It was a godlike thing! That could I never have done, less still this Graf, who heaps crime on crime, yet on whom no chastisement has fallen!"

"It will yet fall. And when you think of him, pray that it may be in this world."

"He is not mine enemy that I should forgive him, but that of my friend; I pardon not such foes as those," said Hildemund, hotly.

Pfarrer Basil smiled and shook his head, but wasted no words on his indignant hearer.

"Where is Ulfrik now?" Hildemund asked.

"He first sought Thomas Knades with me, and then he went to seek his mother."

"Ah!" said Hildemund, with a deep breath, as he realised through his love for his own mother something of what that meeting must have been to both. "And then what did he purpose?"

"As I understood he thought to go to Ulm."

"To Ulm!" repeated Hildemund, longingly. "How my mother would rejoice to learn all this! How she would give thanks that he thus pardoned his foe!"

"He desired greatly to see her, and his young cousin also."

"His cousin?"

"Surely, Rosilde von Burgstein, who is near akin to him, nearer than to Graf Lichtenberg."

"Ah, true. She, too, would be glad; she loved him tenderly when, as a little child, she sought the Eschthal and listened to that angel voice of his—which, indeed, she long held to be verily that of a heavenly messenger."

"See you not, too, that she is rather his ward than that of the Graf, since Ulfric is not only of nearer kin, but head of the house, now that the line of Burgstein is ended in a girl. The tale of Thomas Knades touches her nearly."

"It does!" answered Hildemund, joyfully, as the

fear which had haunted him on Dornröschen's account was thus laid to rest.

"Aye," continued Pfarrer Basil, eagerly, and quite unaware of the course his thoughts had taken, "had Ulfric again his rights, as doubtless he will one day have, he could protect her against all danger, nay more—she is grown to maidenhood, what so fitting as that they—the Church's leave being gained—should wed; and thus would she be beyond all peril from the Graf, who otherwise will surely press hard that her hand be given to his son, that he lose not all with Ulfric's return to life. I spoke thereof to Ulfric, and he was well disposed to have it so. He has ever held in fond remembrance the child who loved him and feared him not."

Pfarrer Basil spoke with eager satisfaction. He had devised the plan and dwelt on it with much pleasure, but, looking up, he stopped short; Hildemund did not know how much his countenance had betrayed until he saw it in the priest's startled face.

"What have you against it?" asked Herr Basil, sharply and suddenly.

"Nought. It is as it should be," Hildemund answered, rallying all his strength to meet the shock.

"Doubtless it is. It were most unfitting to keep the heiress of Burgstein and Rosenthal hidden

under a false name and in a false position, save for right urgent causes. The maiden is of marriageable age, and girls are then a perilous charge. Many may woo her, knowing not her name and rank, and your mother be scarce able to keep suitors aloof. It is not just that so heavy a burden lie on her. Says she not so?"

"Dornröschen can never be a burden. But you are right, reverend sir. Is all then already fixed?"

"That I know not. Ere Ulfric claims his bride he must see his way to regaining his lands. The Graf lets not go what he once has grasped, and he is high in Imperial favour. Little like is it that Ulfric will at once recover them, the more that he counts to offer his sword to Duke Ulrich."

"That is well," said Hildemund, pale with the inward struggle which he had gone through while Basil was speaking. "The Duke has need of all good swords which offer, and such a one as Ulfric's will be worth a dozen of other men's. And when Würtemberg has her lord again, he will do justice to Ulfric—and Dornröschen."

But the name faltered on his lips. The vehement self-disgust with which he found that he could hardly now rejoice that Ulfric was no leper had given him strength to crush down the unworthy feeling, but it was a fresh and most keen pang to

see that after all she might regain name and rank not through him, but through another. His life's aim seemed snatched from him. A sudden memory darted through him of how, involuntarily, but none the less absolutely, he himself had shattered Magdalene's cherished hopes. It seemed like retribution. Pfarrer Basil's eyes rested on him with mingled sorrow and displeasure.

"My son, what is this?" he said. "Am I to understand that you have raised your eyes to Rosilde von Burgstein?"

"Never," answered Hildemund, and Herr Basil could not question the absolute truth of the frank look raised to his. "My heart's desire has been to see her restored to her rightful name and station; that should be answer enough."

"And yet——?"

"How should the Rose of Burgstein not be the sweetest thing on earth—the most priceless treasure in my eyes? Could I have seen her close, first in childhood, and then in her fair, pure girlhood, and not have poured out for her all the love I have to give? It harms her not! None was ever harmed by a great love. Neither by word nor look have I given her to know of it; she will only think of me as an elder brother, a trusty friend."

"See it be so! And yet," added Herr Basil, re-

lenting, as he was sure to do when he had been hasty or severe, "'tis sore pity."

He looked compassionately at the young man, in whose face he could trace tokens of keen suffering, bravely suppressed; "would I could comfort you, my son!"

Hildemund smiled painfully. He thought that one to whom love was unknown and forbidden could ill gauge what he felt.

"There are battles in which a man must fight alone, reverend sir. I pray you to forget all this. Ulfric must never know that his joy makes my pain. None worthier could I find for her, if I searched Germany through, and surely even such happiness as this is due to him after all his sorrow."

"True, yet it is a sore crook that one man's bliss is another's bane," said Pfarrer Basil.

Neither questioned Rosilde's entire acquiescence in the arrangement. It never occurred to either that a girl had any voice in such matters.

"This Thomas Knades," said Hildemund, feeling that he could endure no more until he had had time to face the thought alone. "How took he Ulfric's pardon?"

A cloud came over the priest's face.

"Struck he was, and slow to believe, even when he found that Ulfric had forgiven fully and freely

before he knew that indeed he was no leper, but the evil spirit was not cast out; he has sinned and disbelieved too long easily to return to the path of faith. Yet sure I am his soul shall be saved. It was made known to me that so it should be if the victim of his crime would pardon. Ulfric has won his soul. Methinks every man has somewhat to do in this world of which he shall hereafter say, 'Therefore came I to this hour,' and Ulfric's shall be the saving of Thomas Knades. I wait and pray, but I know that saved he shall be ere he die."

"I may linger no longer, reverend father; the shadows grow long, and my tarrying may belike bring peril on you as well as me."

"Heaven bless and keep you, my dear son, and give you good gifts from the golden treasure house," said Herr Basil, rising too, and looking wistfully and with deep tenderness at Hildemund; "we meet no more."

"Dear sir! wherefore say you so?"

"I go hence, and my place shall know me no more. I am about to leave the Ilzthal and dwell at Hamburg, where there is a lazarus house. Henceforth my task will be to tend, and, if it may be, to comfort those poor prisoners of God on whom His hand rests so heavily."

Hildemund stood dumb. He recollect ed Herr

Basil's intense shrinking from all that was loathsome, or even painful; how, on their first meeting, even the cry of a terrified animal had seemed agony to him; how long it had cost him a visible struggle to approach Ulfric; and he could hardly believe his ears.

"I know your thoughts," said Basil, smiling sadly. "Once, aye, and still even now, this weak heart and weaker flesh shrank from all which could offend them. The more reason wherefore I should crush both. But not that only. Ulfric, in his struggle to overcome his wrath against his enemy, spake words which showed me my infirmity, my hardness of heart—for surely it is nought else—were a stumbling-block in his way. I vowed within myself that if he were victor in that hard strife I would devote myself to this work. And his victory sealed my vow."

Hildemund understood now. Just so, with vehement, uncalculating self-sacrifice would this man have acted at such a time; but his dismay could not be controlled.

"Ah, dear sir! it is a fearful thing to do! Once within those walls you come forth no more, and besides——"

"I know what you would say," answered Herr Basil, the faint flush which emotion had called to

his face fading, and leaving it if possible even paler than before. "The flesh shrinks back, but I shall be upheld. My longing is to embrace the cross and the promise of death. Enough for me if I can bind up some broken hearts. Surely if I tell the story of Ulfric's sixteen years under the curse which has also stricken them, they will take courage."

"But your flock here, dear sir," Hildemund ventured to plead. "How will they fare, you gone hence?"

"Alas! my successor must indeed do little for them if he do not more than I," said the priest, with profound melancholy. "In all these years I know not whether I have done anything which another might not have done better. Yet I love my people, and in Wurzburg it seemed as if I could touch men's hearts."

"Yes, yes, reverend sir; I heard much of that when I was there."

"Did you?" said Herr Basil, the flush returning to his cheek, and an eager light to his eyes. "They remember me still?"

"Most fondly—most gratefully. All I spoke with longed for your return."

"Ah!" and a look of mournful yearning came over his countenance. "And I might have seen them again. I might—my own beloved people! But it is best otherwise."

"Oh, worthy sir, if indeed you can return——"

"Hush, hush, no more of that! Get thee behind me! Nay, I meant not to speak so hastily, but it was as if the tempter, who is ever urging me to draw back, spake by your voice. Surely it was his doing that just when I had offered myself to this work came my recall to Würzburg. My family, unknown to me, had procured it. But I may not—I will not listen. My hand is on the plough; I dare not turn back. And so best. Though indeed I long to return and see again the faces of those whom once I builded up in the faith, and for whom I have ever prayed night and day, I am sick of conflict, sick of questioning. I do harm where most I would do good; I scarce know right from wrong, so mazed am I by the clash of tongues and thoughts in this distracted age. How often have I spoken rashly and smitten when my Master's word would have been, 'Put up thy sword into the sheath.'"

"My mother once said that when His servants do this, He comes Himself and heals the wounds which they have made," said Hildemund.

"Said like herself! I have missed her deep thoughts as a dweller in a desert would miss the spring at which he was wont to drink draughts of cool, refreshing water, if one day he came and found a stone laid on its mouth. May he indeed

heal where I have wounded! And now, my son, my dear son, farewell. We shall see each other's faces no more until we meet where all things will be made plain. Pray for me, as I for you."

CHAPTER XII.

"THIS once, Muhme!"

Rosilde was standing before Frau Magdalene with a laughing, supplicating look, underneath which something earnest was hidden.

"To-morrow is our greatest Saint's Day, surely I may wear my best to do St. Ursula honour, since I am to take part this year in the procession. You refused last year, Muhme!"

"I did, and I would I could do so again. Dear child, until you can resume your name and station such costly things are ill suited to one who is but Röschen Dahn in the eyes of all here," said Frau Magdalene, sorely perplexed, though it went to her heart to refuse Dornröschen leave to wear her ancestral jewels—those jewels which Freifrau Faustina had sent with her to the Bannwart's house, and which Magdalene had felt bound to carry away for her in their hasty flight, whatever else was left behind. They had lain unseen in their casket ever since; Rosilde had shown no interest in them, though

aware of their existence. A burgher maid could not wear such precious things, as Magdalene now reminded her, and Rosilde had not only been content to play the part of a burgher maid, but was inclined to push Magdalene's own line of indifference to show and wealth to an extreme. Now, however, she seemed carried away by the general excitement. All Ulm was preparing for the annual procession, in which all the fairest and noblest of the city were proud to play a part. There was as much intriguing and anxiety about it as if a post of life-long honour had been in question; to have a prominent part was the great event in the life of an Ulmer maiden; and year by year much open or veiled triumph, many heartburnings and secret grudges were the outcome of this day. Even had Dornröschen's fair face not assured her of a place in the procession, she was held too entirely as a member of Master Philip Welser's family not to be invited. To have left her out would have been held a slight to the honoured and revered counsellor which was not to be thought of. Magdalene had strained her authority to the utmost when on the preceding year she had declined the coveted honour for her charge. Even Master Welser, who alone in the household knew whom his roof sheltered, was deaf to her arguments, led away by his indulgent affection for

Dornröschen, and his sense of the honour offered; and Katharina Paumgärtner, though she looked on her with other eyes, was highly displeased, while her husband openly expressed his disapproval and amazement. Dornröschen had submitted, but Magdalene found her refusal so difficult to justify, either to her own family or the public, that she could not again decline. And Dornröschen, full of girlish delight, had brought out her jewels, and loosing the thick tresses usually restrained in many plaits by a silver arrow, was winding her pearls among them, while she pleaded, "This once, Muhme! I shall never wear them again; I know they only befit noble ladies, and I think that burghers' wives and daughters should not ape the dress of noble dames," she added, with a mischievous intonation, which Magdalene very well knew was meant for Katharina; but she did not divine that the girl's persistency was prompted by the desire that for once Hildemund should see her arrayed as Rosilde of Burgstein. Magdalene would not notice the little hit at Katharina, but replied gravely and gently, "Nay, my child, you will not always be a burgher maiden, and doubtless you will wear these jewels on your marriage-day."

"Yes, by-and-bye, when I wed a noble! But, Muhme, I recollect an old saying of Bärbele's—poor

Bärbele! I would I knew what had befallen her!—
‘the street of By-and-bye leads to the house of
Never.’ So will it be with me.”

“I think not so,” said Magdalene, who, during the time that Ulfric had spent at Ulm after parting from Herr Basil, had been made acquainted with his project, and had seen how his first calm interest in Rosilde had deepened into passion, and who was far too loyal and upright to allow her motherly feeling for Hildemund to influence her. “I see a fair life before thee, and an arm which shall guard and protect thee already outstretched.”

Several times before she had approached the subject, but Rosilde either did not or would not understand what Magdalene was not yet authorised to put into plain words. The girl looked at her now with the large limpid eyes, which were at once frank, yet not easy to read.

“You will not understand!” she exclaimed, impetuously, “yet *you* might, Muhme, you who married Kilian Dahn!”

Magdalene started. All at once she perceived that, unawares, in those tender, confidential hours which had been so sweet to both of them, she had set before Rosilde an ideal of wedded love which might fatally interfere with that calm submission,

that readiness to accept any suitor chosen by their family, which was expected of all girls.

“One who weds a good man learns love after marriage and is a happy wife,” she answered. “Look round and see if it be not so.”

“That is true. But how if you had known Kilian and yet were bidden to wed—would you then have given yourself to any other, Muhme!” pursued Rosilde, still looking at her.

“I—I know not,” said Magdalene, blushing as if she had still been a girl; “wherefore ask such idle questions?”

“I know right well what I should have done in such a plight,” said Rosilde, lifting her head like a young stag, “and if need be you shall know too, dear Muhme. But let me forget it all now. What does anything matter when Duke Ulrich is coming to the city,—and Hildemund?”

“And Sir Ulfrik,” added Magdalene, upon which Rosilde turned impatiently away. Magdalene knew very well that she ought to rebuke her, and her conscience told her that she had always been far more indulgent to her wilful charge than she would have been to her had Rosilde been her own daughter, but it was too late to amend now, the more that in spite of formality and discipline being the order of that day, every soul in the house had

combined to spoil Dornröschen, with the one exception of Katharina. Presently Rosilde returned to the attack with “Muhme, if Master Welser says I may wear those jewels, you will not say me nay?”

“When did my uncle ever refuse aught you asked, wilful maid?” said Magdalene, too glad to escape from such a dangerous topic as Kilian Dahn and herself to oppose her further, and Rosilde fastened another string of large pearls in her profuse light brown hair, through which golden threads ran and glistened in the sun, and clasped around her slender throat a necklet formed of golden roses with centres of diamonds or rubies.

“Hildemund has never seen these,” she said, standing before a Venetian mirror, and contemplating herself with simple and serious interest. “Just this once I should like to wear them. Now I will show them to Master Welser.”

She ran off. Philip Welser’s private room was never closed against her. She had become more and more the old man’s favourite with each year which she had spent under his roof, and she had learned to love him well. Magdalene looked after her lithe figure with a troubled expression. She could see nothing but perplexity before her; for while Duke Ulrich’s affairs had begun to run so

smoothly that Ulm had sent to offer him alliance and aid, if need were, to recover his duchy, and he was about to come, under cover of the great annual festival, to discuss the matter in person with the Rath, those of Dornröschen were but a tangled skein. Ulfric had seen it advisable to await the Duke's restoration to his throne before claiming his estates, and as yet Graf Lichtenberg knew nothing of the blow hanging over him; but Magdalene felt sure that he could not long delay to seek Rosilde as his bride, and she feared greatly how this project would be met, for Rosilde had shown more shy fear than pleasure when their relationship had been made known to her, and he had claimed her as ward and kinswoman; it seemed either as if she could not dissociate him from his old character, and that what she had not felt at all as a child, painfully affected her now, or else that she could only regard him as a stranger who came with a claim upon her, and obliged her to recollect she was not Magdalene's own. Since Ulfric's appearance forced this upon her, Ulfric himself was unwelcome. That he did not guess her feelings, Magdalene knew. Bewitched, enchanted by the wayward maiden, he had given himself up entirely to all the delightful hopes from which he had been so long severed. Magdalene's heart ached both for

him and Hildemund. She could see nothing but pain for one or the other, or for both. The best she could hope was that Rosilde's affection for her old friend and companion would remain as innocently frank as now. If so, if nothing aroused a deeper, more conscious feeling, she might yet be a happy wife, and make Ulfric's life glad. But Magdalene would have given a great deal if Hildemund had not been coming to Ulm with the Duke, however much she longed to see him again; and to embrace her new-made knight.

Rosilde, on her way to Philip Welser, had met Katharina, sweeping by with her stately step, but she stopped and exclaimed, "What is this, maiden? Wherefore are you thus decked, and whence came those jewels?"

She could hardly credit what she saw. Such pearls and such a necklace she herself could not boast.

"My mother sent them to Muhme ere she died," answered Rosilde.

"Your mother! they are fit for a princess!" said Katharina, in great astonishment, and then she be-thought her that since Kilian Dahn was a soldier, others of his family might have followed the same trade, and carried off these precious things in the sack of some castle or city. But the owner of such

goodly possessions was not the penniless dependent which she had hitherto been in the eyes of Frau Paumgärtner, who, though proud as any noble, came of merchant blood, and Dornröschen rose considerably in her eyes. She was so much moved by what she had heard that she sought Magdalene, and embarrassed her not a little by her wondering inquiries. She was evidently displeased at never having been told that Dornröschen possessed such valuables. Magdalene thought how true her pre-visions had been that the sight of them would cause trouble, but she did not guess how much more they were to entail.

Rosilde opened the door of Master Welser's room, but stood still in the doorway, a pretty picture of startled confusion. Instead of being alone, as usual at this hour, Master Welser was in earnest conversation with two visitors, who both wore knightly mantles over their short velvet coats, and in the broad hat of one waved the black and white feathers of Lichtenberg. They turned while she stood hesitating and confused, and she saw their faces. With a glad cry she sprang forward. "Hildemund!" she exclaimed, entirely overlooking and forgetting his companion. "We did not look for you till to-morrow, when the Duke enters. Why did you not come at once to seek us?"

Hildemund had turned red and pale as he kissed her hand.

“There was much which the Duke desired to make known to my good uncle here ere he lays it before the Rath,” he said, “and moreover there is one here who has a better right to greet you first than I.”

“A better right than you!” Rosilde said, astonished.

“Aye, sweet rose-bud, your cousin and guardian here,” said Philip Welser, in whose eyes the projects of Ulfric found much favour. “Have you no word for him?”

Ulfric advanced smiling, and she received his greeting with a shade of reluctance and embarrassment.

“I saw only Hildemund,” she said, defiantly, “and no one has a better right to my first welcome than he.”

She lifted her eyes to his, but he dared not meet them, though he had braced himself up for the interview. Now that it had come he found how far from complete his self-schooling had been. He had not betrayed himself in any of those cruel hours when, together at Hohentwiel, Ulfric had spoken of his love, of the sweetness and charms which he had found in Rosilde. Prepared in some

degree by Herr Basil, Hildemund had heard and made no sign, even while inwardly asking himself what Ulfric could know of her compared to himself, who had seen her grow up, had held her as his dearest treasure all these years. He meant to pass through this last hard trial with equal success. But it was more difficult than he had looked for—cruelly difficult when Rosilde's smiling eyes grew troubled and the gladness in her face changed to questioning wonder. He knew he was assuming a respect, a calm deference too unlike the terms on which they had hitherto been, not to perplex her, but do what he would he could not strike that note of tender brotherliness which he sought to find.

“And wherefore are you so decked, little one?” Philip Welser asked, almost in the same words which Katharina had done, but in a far other tone, and the looks of both Hildemund and Ulfric reflected the fond admiration which he involuntarily betrayed as he looked at Rosilde, standing before him with her long hair flowing over her dark-red dress, confined only by the pearls wound in it, while the golden necklet encircled the rounded throat left bare by her square-cut bodice. She drew a pattern on the ground with the tip of her embroidered shoe, and said coaxingly, “Dear Master Welser, you know I am to be one of those who

attend St. Ursula, and I would fain wear these ornaments for once, but Muhme likes it not, and I said I would ask if you deemed it well or not."

"And wherefore likes she it not?"

"She—she says—they should be kept for my marriage day," said Rosilde, colouring like her own flower.

"Ah, says she so?" said the old man, smiling, and glancing at Ulfric. "When that day comes we shall have a fair bride, methinks. How say you, Sir Ulfric?"

Ulfric bent his head, smiling too.

"I shall not wear them then," said Rosilde, turning a little pale, but speaking resolutely, and as if glad to make her determination known. "They are only fit for the bride of a noble, and that I shall never be."

"Wherefore, I pray you, sweet cousin?" asked Ulfric, surprised, but yet more amused than surprised, and esteeming her protest little more serious than if a bird had fluttered and pecked at him.

"Aye, tell us that," laughed Philip Welser. "Wherefore should not the Rose of Burgstein mate among her peers?"

He too spoke in the indulgent tone which a man uses to a favourite child.

"I will tell you," she answered, aware that the

decisive moment must come in which she must manifest those thoughts and feelings which had grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength ever since one memorable night when all her pity and sympathy had been given once and for ever to the oppressed, and as she stood facing all her hearers they began to perceive that this was no childish freak or sportive matter, and listened gravely. "I might say that I would not wed a noble because I have cast in my lot with those to whom I owe everything, life itself—who have risked their own lives for my sake, and sheltered and loved me, and nothing shall divide me from them; but that is not all—not nearly all."

"Sweet kinswoman, none worthy to call you wife would seek to part you in heart from these dear and worthy friends," said Ulfric. "Most dear indeed should they ever be; none can ever do for you what they have done."

"Needs not to tell me that," said Rosilde, with a touch of impatience so like her ways when first she came, a little imperious child, to the Bannwart's house, that it called a smile to Hildemund's face, though he was listening, like Ulfric, in great anxiety and suspense to what she was saying.

"But there is more. When I learned how it stood between serf and noble, what deeds the lords

wrought in the war, yes, and in peace too, and thought no shame, then I wished I were rather the lowliest peasant in Germany than one of a race so hated and so evil. I said then—Hildemund, have you forgotten?—that I would be no more Rosilde von Burgstein, nor have any more name and rank, but give myself as Frau Magdalene does, to help the poor and down-trodden, and so I do, as in me lies, and so I will all my life."

She spoke with vehemence. Philip Welser lifted up his hands in astonishment.

"Dear maid, that may you well do as a noble lady," said Ulfric, touched, but unshaken in his purpose, and knowing too little of girl nature to read the secret feeling, which, half unknown to Rosilde herself, underlay and prompted her course of action.

"I think not so," she answered; "the peasants hold the nobles in fear and suspicion, but they feel otherwise to the burgher; they will take gift or comfort at his hand without a secret curse. Ah, I would I could go back to Burgstein, and help our people there."

"Would you rebuild the castle, cousin?" asked Ulfric, smiling, and recollecting his own resolve that if a miracle could be worked in his behalf he would devote his life to the suffering and sorrowing. With

this enthusiastic helper it would indeed be a pleasant task.

“No, never. Let the castle crumble and fall; who knows what cruel deeds have been done therein? Bärbele has told me things . . . I scarce understood her then; but I remember them now. No, I would have a dwelling in the valley, and dry up all tears, and make everyone forget these last evil years.”

“Alack!” said Philip Welser. “A child’s dream, dear maiden.”

“Then no more should be shed. And Herr Basil . . . Ah, but he is not there. Yet I would I could go back.”

Hildemund had drawn a little apart while she spoke; but Ulfric, lifting his eye to a mirror opposite, caught the look he was bending upon her, a look so intense and mournful that all his secret was told in it. Ulfric started, but Hildemund, unconscious of being observed, brushed his hand hastily across his brow, and silently left the room. Rosilde did not hear his step on the thick carpet, but as the door closed she glanced round and perceived his departure. Her face clouded with pain and disappointment; she looked as if she would fain have gone too, but a dawning consciousness withheld her.

"No, Herr Basil is not there," said Ulfric, after a brief pause into which many thoughts were crowded. "But I have seen him not long since, at Hamburg, whither I went to have one more sight of him. He is serving in a hospital of the Knights of St. Lazarus, whose order tend not the ordinary sick alone, but also lepers—nay, whose Grand Master was long chosen from those unhappy ones."

He spoke with deep feeling. "Had I known of this pious order formerly, surely I had sought to enter it when I thought myself one of those outcasts, and so had at least the consolation of aiding others."

"But—these Knights—how can they tend the lepers, and not themselves fall under the like curse?" asked Rosilde, astonished.

"The Knights do but overlook all that is done; the lepers tend each other, those that are least sick caring for the more grievously afflicted, yet is it none the less a holy and self-devoted life," said Ulfric; and, in the pause which followed, his resolution on that far-off day returned with new urgency, and seemed to call for a fuller, more earnest accomplishment than heretofore. While he had rejoiced in the full tide of life restored to him and basked in fair hopes it had seemed a bright thing; but life looked less sweet, less sunny since he had surprised that look of Hildemund's.

“And the good father?”

“I saw him but through a grating, for he has given himself up altogether, as though he were one of those he tends, and lives among them, and serves them with his own hands. Wan he was, and pale; but there was a happier look in his face than ever I remember there of old.”

“But now, Sir Ulfric,” interposed Master Welser, a little impatient of the digression from what he thought far weightier matters, “were it not well to acquaint our Dornröschen here of certain matters whereof we spoke ere she came in? Hearken, my maid, we learn that Graf Lichtenberg is coming hither, as he avers, on affairs whereof he has to treat with the town, but, as we guess, to meet the Duke, for so greatly have Ulrich’s fortunes changed, that the Graf trembles for his lands, or rather yours —in Würtemberg.”

“Graf Lichtenberg!” she exclaimed, skrimming to his side.

“Aye, and if he set eyes, as belike he will, on one Röschen Dahn, and know her again, what will come thereof?”

She looked from one to the other like a frightened bird.

“Nay, fear not,” said Ulfric, soothingly, “it is time that I put forward my right, and give him to

know I am a living man; I have but bided my time, and I am nearer of kin to you than he, and, if need be, we will appeal to the Rath, as Master Welser counsels, for protection and judgment."

"But hearken yet, little one," said Master Welser, in his kind, fatherly way, as he took her hand, "better yet were it if a husband's shield were over you; then could no Graf in Germany claim you nor threaten you with his son; nought else, I think, offers security in these rude times, and glad my niece Magdalene and I am that a brave and honoured knight offers to shelter our rosebud. Nay, this is no time for silly maiden coyness; cling not thus to me, foolish maid, but give this little hand in my presence to Sir Ulfric, your guardian and kinsman, and thank the saints he is not Sir Wolfgang."

Rosilde stood up at his bidding, but she was very pale, and her face was full of dismay. This was no maiden coyness, as Master Welser had thought; a woman's feelings, a woman's strong recoil from a man she did not love were written there.

"I cannot!" she said, very low, and was gone before either could speak.

"What ails the silly maid?" exclaimed Master Welser, astonished. "What would she have? Heed her not, Sir Ulfric; she is a wayward child who knows not what is for her good. Truly, all the

problems of the schools, all the crabbed manuscripts that ever were written, were easier to deal with than to read a girl's silly heart. But think not of it, think not of it, Sir Ulfrik. 'Tis but that she knows not what she would."

"I fear me it is not so, Master Welser," said Ulfrik, stabbed to the very heart by the expression which he had seen in Rosilde's face. "I fear she knows all too well for me."

"Nay, seek my niece Magdalene, and tell her how the matter stands. I pray you believe this is no fault of hers. I know not whence the child has learned these peevish fancies. Never spoke she thus before. Speak with my niece, I pray you, good Sir Ulfrik."

Ulfrik made a sign of assent. In deep and troubled self-questioning he ascended the stair leading from Master Welser's rooms to that part of the house inhabited by Magdalene. He needed no guide, for this way had become perfectly familiar to him during his former visit to Ulm, when he had been a guest in Master Welser's house. In the anteroom of Magdalene's apartments, standing together in the deep embrasure of a window, were Rosilde and Hildemund. Ulfrik paused an instant. "My love and my friend! do I lose both?" he thought, with a sharp pang of suspicion that Hilde-

mund, whom he held so dear and trusted so entirely, had played him false. He heard Rosilde's last words as he approached unnoticed.

"Hildemund! you knew!" she exclaimed, and the words were full of pain, wonder, and incredulity.

"Surely," Hildemund answered, resolutely steady-ing his voice. "Sir Ulfric spoke often thereof to me in these last months since he came to Hohentwiel. And truly, sweet lady mine, nowhere can more gallant knight nor truer heart be found, and she who has his love owns a crown of honour."

"Think you so?" said Rosilde, salt tears rush-ing to her eyes, and she broke away from him as she had done from Philip Welser, and fled into the inner room without seeing Ulfric.

Neither did Hildemund, who turned away and looked out into the street without seeing anything there, while he muttered audibly, "The saints help me! this is hard;" and then he started and turned as Ulfric laid a hand on his shoulder, looked him kindly and gravely in the eyes, and passed on with-out a word.

CHAPTER XIII.

LONG ere the hour for High Mass the streets of Ulm were alive with the crowd already gathered to

see the procession pass on its way to the Münster, a long and devious way, since it traversed all the principal streets first. The sun had already drunk up the mist which had during the night arisen from the Danube and the Iller, and its beams shone clear and strong, making the red, yellow, and green tiles on the steep roofs to glisten dazzlingly, and playing in the bright waters of the dancing fountains.

Such a crowd as this at a time when every rank and trade had its distinguishing costume could not fail to be a gay and picturesque sight, full of life and colour. In the throng pouring out of every house and street were men and women of every degree. Here a reverend counsellor made his way to the Rathhaus, easily recognised by his black velvet doublet, purple sleeves, and stockings to match, silver grey coat and breeches, and the gold chain on his breast, as well as by a certain dignity and conscious authority. There a burgher in simpler dress of dark brown steered his wife and daughters, arrayed in crimson satin or dark blue, through the press, shrinking, perhaps, with unconcealed disgust from a Jew, marked out by the red and yellow garment which, by order of the Rath, all of Israelitish race were obliged to wear.

Little groups of laughing, chattering girls

clustered at the windows overhead, their long plaits falling over their shoulders, and their curls blown about under their little gold-embroidered caps as they commented on the crowd below and leant out to hang up garlands of yew and pine, or bright flags and shawls, and many-coloured carpets. Masks began to appear and play mad pranks, arousing outcries and laughter, and adding to the gay colouring by their motley dresses, for a carnival was mingled with the solemnities of the day. Workmen were hurriedly putting the last touches to the bowers and arches, decked with blossoms and fluttering ribbons, which were set up wherever two streets crossed, and where an open space offered itself little groups were dancing to the zither of some vagrant minstrel. Peasants came flocking in from all the district round, nobles from distant castles. Such an Ursul-day had not been seen in the memory of man, for in addition to the usual cause of interest there was the great event that on the evening before a piece of St. Ursula's veil had been sent to the clergy at Ulm by the Chapter of Cologne, and all the city were eager to do honour to the precious relic. It was not without reason that the canons of Ulm had counted on the effect of such a priceless gift and grace done to the city; for the moment, the taint of Lutheranism which had

crept into it seemed entirely blown away. The most heretical man in Ulm could not refrain from seeking the Münster and triumphing in his heart over the possession of such a relic as neither Augsburg nor Nuremberg themselves could surpass.

The crowd of good-humoured faces grew denser, and the pressure stronger, but all inconvenience was taken with stolid good temper, and the hum of voices became one great roar of sound, though no one seemed to know he was speaking louder than usual. Many times a great laugh had followed the invariable success of some rogues shouting out, "They come! they come!" and causing all heads to turn, all necks to be outstretched, long before the blare of trumpets and the triple boom of a cannon from the citadel, followed by the clang and clash of all the bells in the town, gave notice that the procession was really beginning to move forward. A way was cleared with difficulty by the halberds of the town guard, and slowly through the long square before the Rathhaus moved the great banner of the city, preceding all the guilds in due rank and order; weavers and bakers, tanners, butchers, redsmiths, and artists, and all the other corporations of Ulm, armed, and bearing the symbols of their several occupations, a goodly show, watched with great interest, especially by those who had relations or friends among them,

and awakening a running fire of jest and comment among the spectators. Behind the guilds came a train yet more popular, of youths and maidens representing prophets and saints; David bearing a harp, the Magi in Eastern costume, carrying their gifts; St. Katharine with her wheel, and Barbara with her tower, and chief of all, St. Ursula, followed by her long line of attendant maidens, with the last lingering white roses of autumn in their hair, and crosses on their breasts, all the flower of Ulmer maidens moving by with downcast eyes and folded hands, demurely ignoring the troop of knights and men-at-arms who followed St. Ursula's handsome bridegroom as he walked beside his saintly bride, and the crowd pressed forward in spite of the halberdiers, and loudly recognised now one, now another, and laughed and rejoiced and closed in again as the procession passed on, and followed in the rear and on either side, a dense mass of good-humoured, delighted human beings, prepared to enjoy themselves from morning to night.

As the procession slowly swept past the mouth of the great Herdbrückgasse, a party of knights who had ridden in through the Donauthor, and had drawn rein to await its approach, lifted their hats, and prepared to follow in the rear when it should have gone by. The spectators had neither time

nor thought to waste on them, nor indeed was it generally known in the city that Duke Ulrich would be present on this day. He had desired that his coming should attract as little attention as possible; his little troop had come quietly and unobserved into the town, and he sat now on the fine black charger to whose strength and speed he had at least once owed his life, with Graf Eberstein by his side, looking on and exchanging remarks with the nobles around him.

“A goodly sight!” he laughed, as the festal car of the innkeepers passed by, with a jovial company seated under the leafy bower erected upon it, amid whose boughs hung garlands of feathered and four-footed game, while a boar’s head, mighty pasties, and tall flagons loaded the table in front of them. “The horses are as sleek and well-fed as the hosts themselves. I know not how Christopher is faring among his uncles of Bavaria, but truly we have seldom seen such goodly and plentiful victuals on our table at Hohentwiel.”

“Well, my lord;” answered Eberstein, “perchance we shall fare better at Stuttgardt.”

“Aye!” said Ulrich, his face brightening, “and that ere long, methinks. Said I not truly when the monk came to us that the tide had turned? Stuttgardt will not be slow to open her gates if all goes

well between us and the Rath here. Peace! here comes St. Ursula herself and her bridegroom. Methinks that had Etherius wedded yon stately damsel he had found himself speedily under her slipper! Truly Ulm can boast of her pretty maidens. What say you, von Lagerström?"

The other knights smiled at the appeal to one who was known to be always a prey to a fair face, and the young noble answered eagerly, "Most true, my lord; one passes but now with a flying angel clasping her mantle, and pearls in her hair. St. Willibald! what hair!—thick as a cloak and down well nigh to her knees!—to my thinking she is the fairest we have yet beheld."

"Nay!" said Ulrich, following her with his eyes. "Many a more beautiful piece of flesh and blood has gone past, yet she has somewhat of air and mien that others lack. Hildemund, say, who plays the part of St. Ursula, and who that damsel even now passing may be?"

Hildemund had joined the Duke when he entered the city. He had not raised his eyes when von Lagerström spoke, but it seemed to him as if he knew beforehand who was near, and what would be said. Ulfric, on the other hand, followed her with a long gaze, which was like a sad farewell. No word had passed between them of any private nature

since the evening before, and Hildemund did not know how much Ulfric had discovered or how little; but strong in the consciousness of having acted honourably and loyally, he waited to learn what that earnest, silent look should mean which Ulfric had cast on him.

“My lord,” he answered, “she who represents the chief part is Margarethe Burckhardt, daughter of the Schultheiss, and the other maiden——” he stopped and looked at Ulfric, as if it were rather his right to complete the explanation. Ulfric was silent, but the Duke understood without further words.

“So?” he said, with a smile. “Come beside me, Sir Ulfric, I would speak with you.”

Hildemund thought he could guess what was passing between them in the low-toned conversation which followed, but he was perplexed by the surprise and regret which presently appeared on the Duke’s countenance; he could have thought that Ulfric had announced some purpose from which the Duke was trying to dissuade him.

He felt as if he must not look or listen, and turned away to Graf Eberstein, who was saying with a laugh, “Until now I have ever held that the heathens of Cologne could scarce do otherwise than they did when eleven thousand virgins appeared on their shores, but if they were as fair as these,

I hold now that even so many were not over-numerous."

All laughed, and the Duke, breaking off his conversation with Ulfric, still with that look of surprise and displeased perplexity on his face, gave a sign to ride onward, and they gradually moved into the main stream of spectators flowing towards the Münster. The Duke started slightly, and pointed to a couple of knights riding in front of them, with several retainers, saying to Ulfric, "See you the colours of your house? Were yonder noble to look round, he might see more than he counted for. Mark you how the temper of father and son shows itself! The Junker would ride down all who come in his way—see, he can scarce refrain from drawing sword on yon halberdier, who bars his way as though Sir Wolfgang of Lichtenberg were but a craftsman, until the crowd can give back. The father speaks all smooth, and wins a passage by fair words and jests. Yet rather would I have to deal with that broad-shouldered churl than with the courteous hypocrite his sire."

"Aye, my lord," said Graf Eberstein, who heard what was said. "Cruel and violent the youth is, but base, never. Did he but know how his father has crept and crouched to high place, methinks he would disown his name."

They made their way slowly through the surging crowd, now moving at a foot's pace, now having to wait many minutes at a time, but accepting delay and inconvenience with the same good-humoured tolerance as everyone else around them, and amusing themselves with the humours of the crowd. Graf Lichtenberg, looking back, presently became aware who the troop behind him were, but the throng between kept them at a considerable distance, and he could not recognise any faces but those of the Duke and Eberstein, who rode first, nor was it any part of his purpose publicly to accost Ulrich. If, however, he did not see all which he might have seen, on the other hand he had already beheld something which very fully occupied his thoughts. He too had marked the slender figure which had attracted young von Lagerström's attention, and though, seeing her unexpectedly after all these years whom he had begun to believe must be dead, he might not have recognised Rosilde, he knew at once the jewelled necklace which she wore, the roses of Burgstein, long an heirloom in his family, and his heart gave a great leap in his breast. "Found!" he said to himself, and all the time that he was answering Wolfgang, and apparently marking all that went on around them, his busy brain was

spinning the net in which his fugitive ward should be securely captured.

Bending down from his saddle as there came one of the frequent stoppages which delayed all for a time, he said courteously to a craftsman standing close by, "Good friend, this is a fair sight, such as few German cities can show. Prithee how are the ladies and the knights who take part in the procession chosen? By their fair faces or their degree?"

"Both, noble sir, so they be of honourable birth," answered the man addressed.

"The two close behind St. Ursul should surely have both claims. Marked you them?"

"Surely," said the man, well pleased, "and so they have. The one on the right was Elizabeth Schöngauer, whose father is head of the cloth-weavers' guild, and she who walked beside her, with the long hair flowing loose, is akin to Mistress Dahn, cousin of my master, worthy Hans Paumgärtner. Many a time when she was a child have I seen her in our counting-house."

"A Paumgärtner, say you?"

"Nay, a Dahn—Röschen Dahn."

A sudden movement in the crowd swept them apart, but the Graf had learned enough. Further

inquiries could wait. During mass he would have ample time to consider what steps to take, and he was well pleased that Wolfgang had gathered nothing of what was passing, even while impatient of the dulness which never comprehended anything which was not put into plain words. This matter craved wary walking, such as Wolfgang was quite incapable of, especially just when he was so angered and chafed at having to move at the pleasure of craftsmen and townsfolk, that it would be well if he were got within the Münster before he had harmed anyone. The Graf, anxious to avoid scandal, and to have time for reflection, rejoiced when at length the stately building came in sight, with the throng forced back on either side of its noble doorways, to let the guilds enter and take their places in their respective chapels, while St. Ursula and her attendants were conducted to the special place allotted to them, and the clergy advanced in gorgeous vestments and long array to receive them with even more solemnity and splendour than usual.

The wide space within the cathedral was soon filled from end to end, while the sunlight from without streamed in through the wide portals, open to their full extent for this great occasion, contrasting with the rich and varied hues of the rays which

fell from the deeply coloured panes in the tall windows. The large number of townsfolk who could not find standing room within the Münster stood on the steps and overflowed into the square in a dense mass, round the guild cars, and a priest came out and addressed them on the story of Ursula, and the precious gift sent to Ulm from Cologne. It was a striking sight, and the intense stillness of the whole crowd while the priest spoke was not the least striking part; but there were not wanting hearts full of trouble in the throng, nor busy brains plotting mischief, both within and without the Münster, even while all knelt and prayed with seeming reverence. For the Duke's party a way had been made, but the multitude closed in again like a flood temporarily divided, and Graf Lichtenberg found himself on the edge of so compact a mass of people, that even had he wished it much more than he did, it would have been impossible to penetrate further. With a sign to his little troop he turned bridle, and made his way back to his hostelry, the "Three Crowns," where Magdalene had alighted when she returned to Ulm. Thence he saw Philip Welser when he came home from mass, with his family, except Hildemund, who used the pretext of being in attendance on the Duke to avoid meeting Rosilde. From the window of his chamber the

Graf watched her cross the square beside Magdalene. She looked pale and weary, as she well might, after such an exhausting ceremony, but if her heart had been lighter perhaps she would not have moved with so spiritless a step. She was young enough, too, to resent that the great day should have brought her only disappointment. Ulfric was not to be seen any more than Hildemund, as Magdalene noted with uneasiness. What Master Welser had reported, and the little which she had gleaned from Rosilde, was food for anxious foreboding, and then she felt sure that Graf Lichtenberg's coming must lead to ill. She felt strangely out of tune with the general festivity, the more that her habitual tone of mind led her to be somewhat indifferent to that gift—a bit of St. Ursula's veil—in which the city was exulting.

A great banquet in the Rathhaus followed the ceremonies of the morning, imitated as far as possible in every house in the city, the richer inhabitants supplying means to the poorer to entertain themselves and their friends, and this year the feasting in the Rathhaus was more profuse and magnificent than usual, because of the greatness of the occasion, and because Duke Ulrich was to take part in it. No business could be transacted, even had time allowed, where wine flowed so freely that

not a few even of the council were scarcely able to appear at the stately dance which concluded the day. It was held in the great council chamber, where the torchlight flickered brightly on the low ceiling and the dark wainscoting, and the long row of grave portraits facing the windows, where the arms of all the chief families of Ulm might be seen in the painted glass, portraits of many generations of burgomasters, with one hand on their hips and the other on a table. The unchanging faces looked gravely down on the brilliant crowd below and the movements of the dancers in the middle of the hall, almost with a rebuke in their eyes which seemed to follow one and another; but they belonged to the past, and those on whom they looked to the present, and no one bestowed a thought or a glance on them.

Graf Lichtenberg was not one of those assembled in the Rathhaus. He kept in the background until the morrow, when he purposed to strike a decisive blow, and he feared, too, how Wolfgang might conduct himself among those whom he regarded as "a burgher pack." Could he have been at ease to leave him elsewhere he had not brought him to Ulm, but he felt the need of keeping him under his own eye, since his rash strictures on his return to Vienna upon the conduct of Graf Redwitz at

Grinau had aroused the enmity of the powerful noble, an enmity the more intense from the semi-disgrace in which he found himself. Wolfgang had proved himself so little fitted for court life that his father found it needful to withdraw him from Vienna. It was evident that some other career than that of a courtier must be found for him, and the Graf was anxiously seeking other means of advancing his fortunes. A project of a wealthy alliance had been ruined by his drawing on himself the hostility of the Redwitz family, and nothing could have been more opportune than the discovery of Rosilde. Graf Lichtenberg had never felt secure in possession of her lands. He had always had a lurking fear that one day she would reappear and demand her heritage. It must now be his part to forestall such a demand.

CHAPTER XIV.

If all Ulm had with one accord given itself up on the Ursul-tag to holiday making, by early morning on the next day the city had resumed its usual aspect, and seemed making up by added diligence for the pause in its usual busy life. Again the shops and counting-houses were open, and heavy waggons rolled slowly through the narrow streets,

and paused to be laden or unladen before the warehouses, and only a forgotten and half-faded wreath here and there remained to testify to the preceding day. The space before the Münster, but a few hours before so densely peopled, was empty, except for a small country cart drawn by oxen, which now and then crossed it, or an occasional worshipper going into the cathedral, where the sacristans, with a little troop of underlings, were removing the hangings and sweeping the floor, while mass went on in one of the chapels; or a stray customer sought the little shops built against the Münster, and looking like toy buildings at the foot of the great red tower. The workshops of the freemasons who had been engaged on it at the end of the previous century still stood in its mighty shadow, but no sound came from them; for some years the progress of the building had been arrested, and no stone was yet laid of the noble spire which was planned to crown the edifice. The city was always talking of continuing the work, but one cause and another hindered it, and it was not resumed, then nor later.

The Rath were as fully occupied as the rest of the townsfolk, for every member had been summoned to take his place to discuss the proposals made to and by the Duke of Würtemberg, and Ulm had

been too long "gut bündisch" for unanimity to reign in their counsels when aid to Ulrich was under consideration. It was not on such an occasion as this that the merchant city showed to the best advantage. The burghers were apt to drive hard bargains with those who needed their aid, and gain all the advantage they could, taking much more than they were willing to give. Of generosity or public spirit, beyond their own walls, they knew absolutely nothing; patriotism for them meant the advantage of Ulm, and theirs was essentially that charity which ends as well as begins at home. All the self-control which Ulrich had so hardly learned in exile and misfortune was sorely tried, and those of his nobles who accompanied him to the Rathaus marvelled to see the strong resolution with which he governed himself, and now yielded, now stood firm, but was ever the Duke of Würtemberg, a prince conscious of his station and dignity, neither to be cajoled nor threatened, and showing no sign of the stormy temper which once was aroused by the slightest opposition. While the debate was going on, one of the officials had entered and spoken apart with the Burgomaster, who made a brief and hasty answer, as to something which could not be allowed to interfere with weightier matters, but when at length the treaty with Ulrich was con-

cluded, to the general satisfaction of all concerned, he rose in his place, and glancing round for a moment to secure attention, said: "Since now we have but to commit to writing and to sign the conditions agreed on between this our city and the noble Duke of Wurtemberg, we have leisure to listen unto another matter which is brought before us. Graf von Lichtenberg claims to be heard touching his ward and kinswoman, who, as he avers, is sheltered and hidden from him under the roof of worthy Master Philip Welser, our honoured brother counsellor and fellow-townsman. Does it please you, worshipful sirs, that this lord appear to plead his cause?" All eyes turned in surprised inquiry on Philip Welser, who rose and answered: "She of whom he speaks is indeed under my roof, and by my mouth denies his claim, and appeals to the protection and judgment of this council."

"It were well then that both parties be summoned," said the Burgomaster; and there was a murmur of assent.

"An it please you I will send for not only the damsel, but my niece, since she brought her hither, and can if need be tell your worship wherefore the maid was—I deny it not—stolen away and hidden here," said Master Welser, and there was again a general assent, while Ulrich said, "Since this run-

away can scarce be any other than Rosilde of Burgstein, long reputed dead, whose lands lie chiefly in Würtemberg, I would fain, with your permission, my worthy masters, remain to hear the cause."

"We are honoured by your presence, my lord," said the Burgomaster, and as he spoke von Lichtenberg and his son entered, the Graf bowing with studied courtesy first to the Rathsherren and then to Ulrich, while Wolfgang looked round with a fierce and haughty stare, chafing visibly at thus submitting his cause to a burgher tribunal.

"Worthy sirs," the Graf said, "I thank you that you thus readily lend us your ear. I might indeed in all right and justice claim and bear hence my ward, contracted in childhood to this my son, and therefore doubly under my authority, but far be it from me to show even seeming slight or discourtesy to your city or yourselves. Rather do I thank good Master Welser, that he has thus cherished and sheltered her whom I had believed to have perished in the sack of Schloss Burgstein, and make known my gratitude to his honoured niece, Frau Magdalene Dahn, who saved and guarded her in those wild and evil times, scarce yet gone by, which came with the peasant war. Methinks there is no more to say on the matter."

The temperate and courteous tone of this ad-

dress made a strong and favourable impression on the Rath.

“We have neither the desire nor the right to withhold your ward, my lord,” said the Burgomaster, glancing round to claim assent, “but it would seem that she denies your claim.”

“I am her nearest of kin,” answered von Lichtenberg.

“She was promised me to wife by her father,” broke in Wolfgang; “mine she is, and mine she shall be, whether any here will or no—’tis all one to me.”

“Young sir, that shall yet be seen,” said the Burgomaster, displeased. “Law, not the strong hand, rules here. Master Welser, comes the maiden?”

“Aye, she is here,” said Philip Welser, as the doors were thrown open, and Magdalene entered, leading Rosilde, who had Hildemund on her other side, clasping fast the fingers which were very cold and trembling, though she seemed outwardly calm and fearless. She made a grave reverence to the council, where she knew almost every face well, from the venerable countenance of Philip Welser to that of the young under-secretary, too constant a visitor at the Welser house for his own peace. There was a mingled sweetness and resolution in her expression which made her very attractive even

in the grave eyes of the Rath, and Ulrich regarded her with great interest.

“Welcome at length, fair ward and cousin,” said von Lichtenberg, with a faint, mocking smile, as she took her place, and Wolfgang surveyed her much as a hawk might have stared at a dove on which he was preparing to pounce. “I know not by what mischance I have been long led to believe you dead, but right glad am I that the truth is at length made clear.”

“My lord, I have been among faithful friends, else indeed it may be I had died as you deemed,” answered Rosilde’s clear, silvery voice, “but ward of yours I am not, nor know I of any claim you have over me, since a nearer kinsman lives than you.”

“You have no nearer kinsman than myself, fair cousin.”

“Therein you err,” said Ulfric, stepping out of the group of knights standing behind the Duke, and confronting the man who had so deeply injured him with a stern and fixed gaze. “I, Ulfric of Lichtenberg, son of your elder brother, heir of his lands and head of our house, stand nearer akin to Rosilde of Burgstein than any man alive.”

“Thou! Here!” exclaimed Graf Lichtenberg, livid with dismay. “Thou! wouldst force me to proclaim our shame? Worthy Rath, this shameless

man, my nephew indeed, but long dead to us all—must I unveil the truth and speak our disgrace? I know not how he comes here in the company of men like yourselves, and among knights and nobles and this high prince, he who, however fair his face and dauntless his air, has the taint of leprosy on him!"

There was a hasty shuddering movement throughout the hall, and looks of horror and aversion were cast on Ulfric.

"'Tis lightly said," he answered in a deep, calm voice, still with his eyes fixed on the baleful and ashy face of the Graf; "men are ever willing to believe what they desire, and truly I think that may explain how you, fair uncle, whom few have deceived, lent so ready an ear to the leech Thomas Knades, when, for reasons which perchance you would not have me lay before this honourable Rath, he bid you count me a leper. But leper I never was, and if you doubt thereof, it needs but to summon him from Regensburg, where he dwells as Father Arnolph, and he will bear all needful testimony. Would you have me say more?"

The eyes which had rested on Ulfric now turned to Graf Lichtenberg with an unmistakable expression. For the first time in his life he stood confounded, striving in vain for words. Almost more bitter than the

consequences which this resurrection entailed was the discovery that he had been gulled and tricked by his tool. Wolfgang looked first at him, then at Ulfric, amazed, bewildered, dimly understanding that much was implied which for the honour of his family Ulfric would not speak more plainly.

“It needs not, as I deem, to speak further on this cause,” said the Burgomaster, breaking the short significant pause; “if the noble Sir Ulfric be the guardian of the maiden, it is for him to dispose of her as he thinks well.”

“Nay,” said von Lichtenberg, struggling to recover himself and grasp something in the wreck, “were she ten times his ward she is none the less contracted to my son.”

“Is this so, Fräulein?” asked Philip Welser.

“Never! worthy sir,” answered Rosilde.

“How!” broke in Wolfgang, hardly restrained by the stern exclamation of the Graf, “Peace, boy. And you, fair cousin, would you forswear yourself by denying that from infancy you were held the bride of my son, by your father’s full consent and desire? And though in an angry moment he would fain, I deny it not, have recalled his word, yet well he knew that a solemn troth-plight and contract could not be broken or set aside, entered into by

the parents of both parties. Is it not so, worshipful sirs?"

He turned to the Rath as he spoke.

"Surely," all answered, for such a compact was held little less binding than marriage itself, and the calm and scornful certainty with which he had spoken made a great impression. Rosilde herself was not now sure whether what he asserted was not the truth, and she looked now at Hildemund and now at Ulfric with an appealing terror which went against her cause.

"If this be so, the *Graf* has the stronger claim," said the Burgomaster, slowly. Von Lichtenberg bowed low in answer.

"Sure I am that I may count on justice from the worthy burghers of Ulm," he said, "and if need be, Brother Lucas, who was present when the contract was made, will testify to the matter, but methinks my word should be enough."

"If the maiden were too young to recollect the thing, surely the *Junker* should have some memory of it?" said Philip Welser.

"Nay, a boy, a child, would better remember hawk or hound than a troth-plight," said the *Graf*, smiling.

"She was ever deemed mine, that I know," said Wolfgang, sullenly. "I recollect nought beyond, but

it shall be ill for him who withholds her from me, whether knight or churl."

There was a pause; the members of the Rath leaned forward and spoke low together; Magdalene pressed the ice-cold hand which lay in hers; Philip Welser's face grew very anxious, and Ulfric opened his lips to speak, but refrained. He could not resolve, even in this strait, to accuse his kinsman of the foul deed which lay between him and Rosilde. Hildemund stepped forward.

"Honoured sirs," he said, and at the sound of his voice Wolfgang recognised him, and glared furiously upon him, hardly restrained by his father's strong and silent grasp, "ere you judge this cause, please you hear what I have to tell of a deed done on the day which made this Edelfräulein an orphan."

Then Graf Lichtenberg knew who had told Walther the seneschal, and in spite of himself he made a movement as if to interrupt, but quickly recollecting that Walther was dead, and that for the honour of his name Ulfric, whatever he had learned, would be silent, he changed his mind, and listened with unmoved and lofty scorn while Hildemund related the quarrel of the kinsmen at Schloss Burgstein, and the events which followed. To Rosilde it was all new; pale, with parted lips, and hands pressed hard together, she heard the tale, while the

deepening attention of the counsellors, and an occasional murmur or interchange of looks, showed how strongly it affected them. The Duke sat by, watching all keenly, but studiously observing the part of a spectator, present only through the courtesy of the tribunal on whom judgment depended.

“Prithee, young sir, since you saw not the Freiherr’s death, how know you how he came by it?” said von Lichtenberg, as Hildemund, much moved, paused an instant.

“I saw it not indeed, but I can call one who did,” answered Hildemund, with a glance at Ulfric, which the Graf surprised, and showed that he had surprised by a momentary look of malignant hatred.

“Whither tends all you have said, young sir?” asked the Burgomaster.

“To this,” Hildemund answered, “that Rosilde of Burgstein cannot wed the son of him who planned her father’s murder, and that he did so I aver, and will prove it on his body.” He flung his glove before the feet of the Graf as he spoke.

Von Lichtenberg answered only by a slight gesture of disdain, but with a shout of inarticulate fury Wolfgang sprang forward.

“Thou—thou churl!” he stammered, his voice thick with rage; “dost thou accuse my father of this treachery? Dost think any ear will heed the slanders

of a base-born varlet—any noble meet a new-baked knight like thee in honourable combat? Thou art scarce worthy to be scourged by my grooms!"

"Hold!" exclaimed the Duke, in a voice of command which controlled even Wolfgang in the height of his fury. "Stand back, Sir Hildemund. I will not have this quarrel taken up. He who insults you insults also the prince at whose sword you received knighthood. Peace, mad boy, and brawl not in this presence."

"Pardon him, my lord; were he as old as I, he would heed little for an idle accusation such as none here credit," said the Graf, looking calmly from face to face along the council board.

"It were well that this Kunz were summoned if he be in the city," said Philip Welser. "That were but just to all."

"Aye, aye, have him hither; let this slanderer be confronted by his equals," burst in Wolfgang. "The man is at the 'Three Crowns.'"

He stopped as if he had been struck, so dark and menacing was the glance which his father gave him, and so much did it convey, although the Graf said indifferently, "So be it, though I know not how the tale, if it turn out true, can either touch me—I deign not to justify myself from so wild a charge—

or bear on the matter of a solemn contract between my son and the Edelfräulein of Burgstein."

No one answered, and the deep pause and hush while Kunz was summoned seemed to strangely affect Wolfgang. He turned from dark-red to pale, and his eyes roved wildly and full of increasing trouble over the faces of the council and those of his father and Ulfric, who stood with a sad and downcast look, as if deeply humiliated by what was passing, yet finding no word of protest or defence. The Graf alone preserved his usual calm, weary, indifferent air, making no sign when Kunz appeared, astonished and perplexed by the summons, and evidently asking himself the cause of it. He looked round inquiringly on the counsellors, seated in their places, the group of knights around Ulrich's chair of state, Magdalene and Rosilde, and his own master, whose face told him nothing. Nor did the sight of Rosilde, whom he did not recognise, though she shrank with irrepressible horror at the sight of him, even while gazing with a sort of fascination at her father's murderer.

Graf Lichtenberg made a sign to the Burgomaster to ask what he would, and Wolfgang came a step nearer, with an eager hope in his eyes, dashed by growing fear. The Secretary of the Rath put the usual questions to one under accusation, as to name

and residence, and then looked to the Burgomaster for further questions, uncertain how to proceed in so unusual a case.

"Hark you, sirrah," said the Burgomaster, "we know too much for it to serve your turn to lie. Why slew you the Freiherr von Burgstein in the Eschthal? Answer fully, or the question awaits you."

Kunz did not need to be told that "the question" meant rack and cord, but he held his peace.

"My lord of Lichtenberg, if you bid him reply, mayhap he were less dumb," said one of the Rath.

"Give answer, fellow," said the Graf.

"I knew he would do my lord an ill turn if he lived," said Kunz, readily enough.

"So! And at whose bidding did you thus?"

"No man's."

"How! no man's?"

"No man's," he repeated doggedly.

"Would you have me believe that no man knew of your intent, nor egged you on?"

"No one," he answered again, without looking up.

All remained convinced that the old follower of the Graf was lying at the cost of his life for his master. The keen eyes of the Duke saw a gleam of relief flit over the Graf's countenance.

"You hear, worthy sirs," he said; "I will not suppose that you needed to examine this man to remove suspicion of myself, but for your further satisfaction I will ask him more. Speak, man; knew I aught of your purpose?"

"Nought, my lord," answered Kunz, in the same dull, unchanging tone.

"Have him to prison," said the Burgomaster, and Kunz was led out, turning for a moment a look of pitiful appeal on his lord; then, as he met no response from those calm and cold eyes, he muttered, "I knew St. Eustace bore me malice," and followed the officials who led him away.

"A right faithful follower," murmured the Duke, audibly, expressing the thoughts of all there, while the Graf, glancing at the baffled countenances around him, said, with half-veiled triumph, "And now, worshipful sirs, please you end this matter which has kept us too long; methinks, despite the claims of my fair nephew, I have by law and usage the keeping of my son's betrothed, her parents being dead, until the marriage, which shall speedily take place."

"True it is that you have law on your side, Sir Graf," answered the Burgomaster, reluctantly, while more than one of the Rath muttered something about giving the lamb to the wolf, "and we are the

last to deny a claim so founded." He paused, and Ulfric made a step forward, but before he could speak, Rosilde rose up, and her movement checked Wolfgang, who had also stepped forward, about to speak, and it was amid a general silence of expectation that she said, "Good sirs, and my Lord Duke, please you hear me. Since I have heard these things, that until now a kind pity has kept from me, I am steadfastly purposed to marry none, least of all Sir Wolfgang, but to retire into a cloister. I pray you thwart me not; my lands I humbly resign into my sovereign's hands, praying him to protect me, and do with them as he will."

"And you do well! Aye, get you to a cloister; I am no mate for you. Let us go hence; I would we had never come!" exclaimed Wolfgang, overcome by the passion of shame and despair which he had vainly tried to master; and he suddenly broke from the hall, leaving everyone taken by surprise and touched with unexpected pity, excepting only his father, whose face was as dark as night.

"Headstrong fool!" he muttered, "all is over now." But, true to the part he had played all along, he bowed to the Rath and the Duke, and saying to Rosilde, "The bride of heaven, so be it, but of none else. Farewell, sweet cousin; my beni-

son on your vocation, which seemeth something sudden," he followed his son, with a tumult of wrath, apprehension, and foreboding in his heart.

"Tis pity!" said Philip Welser, with deep regret, as he left his place, and came up to Rosilde, who had sunk on her chair, pale and trembling, while she looked at Hildemund, who met her eyes now with all his heart in his own. "The Rose of Burgstein to wither in a cloister!"

"Nay, such a contract, so doubtful, for who can trust either this Graf or his witness—and one so against nature—can scarce hold," said the Burgo-master. "The matter, laid before our Holy Father, and well supported, will sure be given in your favour."

"And thus laid it shall be, on my word as a prince," said the Duke, emphatically, "were it but to baffle and chastise yon crafty sinner who goes out with so proud a crest. His Junker is worth ten of him."

Rosilde drooped her head as she sat, the centre of a little group which had gathered round her, hardly conscious of anything but the barrier she had raised between herself and Hildemund. "Let us go home," she was whispering, as Magdalene bent anxiously over her, when a sudden outcry, a running together, a tumult in the square, startled

all, and filled the windows with spectators. The Burgomaster hurried out on the balcony, and bent forward over the crowd. "Hold! hold!" those within heard him call loudly, as he vainly tried to attract attention. "Know you not our laws? Hold, if you would not lose right hand or life itself by the doomster's axe. They heed not. Master Glockengiesser, call the guard;" and while the Secretary hurried out, Philip Welser exclaimed, "'Tis that young hot-head Sir Wolfgang has fallen out with a young knight, sure one of your train, my Lord Duke. Madmen! they fight as though the streets of Ulm were a meadow by the Blau or the Iller! The Graf seeks to stay them. Will no one part them? 'Tis deadly earnest."

"One of my train?" said Ulrich, much displeased, "and at such a time! Go, Eberstein, and see who has thus forgotten himself within the walls of this fair town."

"He is down! Sir Wolfgang is down! Sanctuary! sanctuary! See, the crowd makes way! By St. Sebald here is the guard!" shouted the knights at the windows. "'Tis von Lagerström, my lord."

"Von Lagerström," exclaimed Ulrich, greatly annoyed that anything should endanger the good understanding between him and the city; "he shall dearly aby this." Almost as he spoke Graf Eber-

stein returned. "A bad day's work, my lord, but young von Lagerström is scarce to blame. It would seem that as this unlucky Junker rushed home, all dazed with wrath and shame, he stumbled over von Lagerström, lost in gazing at a comely wench drawing water at the fountain, and when to a rough deed Sir Wolfgang added rougher words, belike our young spark answered not too softly, and then the mad Junker drew upon him and well-nigh ran him through unawares. He could but defend himself, and I trust the noble Rath will deal mercifully with him. Many can testify how it was."

"Aye," said the Secretary, who had returned, "all say never was so mad an assault. They declare one would have thought the Junker of Lichtenberg sought his own death rather than that of his foe."

"Belike he did!" muttered Ulfric. "Poor lad!"

"Is he then dead?" asked the Duke.

"As St. Ursula and all her virgins, my lord. He ran on the point of von Lagerström's sword, and fell a dead man before his father's eyes."

"So the Graf finds himself landless and childless in one day. I could find in my heart to pity him," said the Duke.

"Good my lord, waste not pity on such a master of renardie. He will yet prosper and do many an-

other ill deed," said Eberstein. "It were well for the Fräulein here had the father fallen rather than the son."

"Aye," said the Duke, forgetting Wolfgang in this suggestion. "Sir Ulfrik, this ward of yours may cause yet much ado. Best give her and her rights unto me as her suzerain."

"I do so gladly, my lord," answered Ulfrik; and so entirely were girls, especially heiresses, held as the property of their families, that no one was surprised at this summary disposal of Rosilde, without allowing her a voice in the matter. She looked up with fresh fear and anxiety as Ulfrik spoke, waiting to hear what should follow, and the councillors, preparing to escort the Duke with due ceremony from the hall, sat down again to learn what should be the fate of her whom they had seen grow up as Röschen Dahn, and had hardly yet realised as Rosilde von Burgstein. Hildemund gathered himself together, and avoided the loving look which Magdalene gave him. He could not bear it then.

"Fräulein," said the Duke, after a moment's smiling pause, "this little hand which holds so many broad lands should of right belong to your kinsman, Sir Ulfrik, and surely no fairer lot could be found for any maid. So would I have it, for in Sir Ulfrik I count one more of those faithful friends

who joined me in misfortune, and forced me to believe in truth and loyal love, when else I had held such things but a dream. But even princes, as none know better than I, cannot do as they would, no, not even to reward a trusty friend, and Sir Ulfric seeks a nobler end than sweet love and pleasant days, as I learn his mind is set to become a Knight of St. Lazarus."

Hildemund started, and made a movement which Ulfric checked with a kind, authoritative word and sign. Rosilde lifted anxious eyes to him and Hildemund.

"But," the Duke continued, "I thank Heaven's good bounty, I have others yet whom it is my duty and my joy to reward, and on one of them I will bestow this hand, unless indeed, gentle Fräulein, your mind be irrevocably set on the cloister and a religious life?"

"It is, my lord," said Rosilde, imploringly; "I pray you believe me."

"I must, and sin it would be to cross so true a vocation, though grieved for your sake I am, Sir Hildemund; for fain would I have given the maiden whom you have so loyally guarded to him who saved my life and delivered my son from captivity. But you hear her resolve."

"My lord, I knew not that you meant Hilde-

mund," faltered Rosilde, with naïveté which called a smile on all the grave listening faces around the council board, and made the Duke laugh outright.

"There, take your bride, Sir Hildemund," he said; "it would seem we shall hear no more of the cloister. Truly I think that face will better befit the matron's coif than the nun's veil."

Hildemund advanced, glowing with rapture and surprise, yet with a generous pang for Ulfric.

"My noble master," he said, "most thankfully do I acknowledge your goodness, and truly will I seek to merit it, though such a guerdon is beyond the merit of any man. But I think I speak the desire of the Edelfräulein as well as my own when I pray you to give me but her hand, and to bestow her domains on the noble friends of whom you truly say you have no lack. I am not of birth which fits me to take my place among them as landed lord."

"The maiden and not the lands!" answered Ulrich in surprise, but far from ill pleased. "Nay, Burgstein at least should be hers, but that domain lies in Thuringia; it is not mine to keep or withhold; it is a free fief."

"The Fräulein has but to retain it; none can claim it at her hand; it is her Stammschloss," said the Burgomaster; "surely that she will not let go."

"No," said Rosilde, lifting her shy and smiling glance to Hildemund, and each thought of what she had said of Burgstein to Philip Welser. For a moment as their eyes met they forgot all but each other while Ulfric, as he stood apart and looked at them, thought that not even as the leper of the Eschthal had he fully learned what the loneliness of life could be, yet drank of the bitter cup of self-sacrifice which he had set to his lips without faltering, and set his face steadfastly to mount a loftier, if a less flowery, path than that of happier men.

THE END.



